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MORTALLONE

AND

AUNT TRINIDAD

Tales of
the Spanish Main

BY

Sir Arthur T. Quiller-Couch



BRISTOL
J. W. ARROWSMITH LTD., QUAY STREET
LONDON
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO. LIMITED

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First published in 1917
Second Edition, 1918

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THE KEYS OF MORTALLONE

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The Keys of Mortallone

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCES ME

My father, Roger Handfast, was a Bristol man born, and kept a pewterer's shop on the old Bridge, now pulled down with the houses that lined it on either side of the causeway. He had married (somewhat late in life) Deborah Clipseby, a currier's daughter of the parish of St. Mary Redcliff; and I, Philip Handfast, was their only child.

My parents set great store by me, and I dare say supposed—being passably well-to-do—that beyond their agreement nothing was needed to set me going on a fair path of life. My mother, whose family had once been gentle, and married in its time with the great houses of Courtenay and Crewe, procured that I should be taught at the best Grammar School in the City, and dreamed of my rising through Holy Orders to end as a Bishop. But my father would have

me be a pewterer as his father and grandfather had been before him; for, saving me, he had no kinsman to inherit the business with its good-will. The good woman, therefore, sighed and gave way.

But not I. Our house stood on the lower side of the Bridge, and the window of my attic bedroom at the back looked down and along the shipping that always crowded the river. Ever since I had slept in that room—which is to say, since I could remember anything at all—to go to sea seemed to me not only the best but the only possible calling for a man; and though, about my sixteenth year, a craze for theatre-going had almost driven the master passion out of my head, this lasted for a brief while only, and in the end (as I shall tell) was the means of launching me on shipboard.

Certainly I owe the theatre much gratitude for having made my 'prenticeship tolerable. Our one playhouse lay just without the city bounds, by Jacob's Wells, at the foot of Brandon Hill, and thither I resorted every Wednesday and Saturday night, which cost me two shillings weekly out of the half-crown my father allowed me. He would have beaten me had he guessed where the money went; but my mother (who knew well enough) hid the

transgression. She understood how it chafed me to live at home and be a pewterer; and, for the rest, this play-going did a lad little harm. The company in the shilling gallery might be none too reputable; but when the curtain went up, what mattered the company? I was in Verona, Granada, Venice, Illyria, the Forest of Arden. I lost my heart to all the heroines, and when the curtain had fallen would walk home shaken all the way with their beauty and their sufferings. Particularly I remember that on the last night of all (a Wednesday), the play being Mr. Oatway's *Venice Preserved*, I bent my face down in the gallery between my hands and wept, unable to look while Belvidera knelt to Juffier—

> 'Tho' the bare earth shall be our resting-place,
> Its roots our food, some clift our habitation,
> I 'll make this arm a pillow for thy head . . .'

This Belvidera was the famous Mrs. Margaret (or Peggy) Carberry, a native of Bristol, who had gone up to Covent Garden and taken the town. She was back amongst us, fulfilling a week's engagement, of which this was her benefit night; and we Bristolians had gone wild with pride in her and in her triumphs. For my part I could have forgiven much to a world that contained so rare a creature

CHAPTER II

THE GREY PARROT

WELL, the next day I happened to be strolling down by the docks, as my custom was after the dinner hour, when I came plump upon my goddess. She had left her chairmen by the foot of Baldwin's steps, and was mounted on an orange-box in the centre of a small crowd by the quay's edge, very merrily watching a ship's auction. What had brought her I know not—some whim, no doubt: but there she was, and her only escort a small negro boy in a page's suit with a flame-coloured turban. There she was, and the crowd (you may be sure) enjoying her presence amazingly.

The morning had been damp, with a sou'-westerly wind and some rain that yet shone on the cobbles; and she wore a long hooded cloak of grey cloth edged with fur. But, the drizzle lifting, she had pushed back the hood and stood bareheaded—if that word may be used of a pile of auburn hair, dressed

high above her brow in triple tiers, with a gemmed brooch flashing in the top-knot.

All my eyes being for her, it took me some time to grasp the occasion of her curiosity. The ship alongside the quay was an old brig; her name—pressing close, I read it on her stern—the *Royal Anna*; and I have seldom seen a dirtier craft. Whatever her fenders protected, it was not her paint, which had long ago perished. Her main yard and main-tops'le yard lay slanted this way and that; her hatch-covers littered the waist like old firewood; her decks were foul with black dust—it might be coal, or it might be gunpowder. In fine, you could detect nothing ship-shape about her, bating her guns — two brace of four-pounders, with a brass swivel forward and another on the poop-deck—which by contrast shone like a Dutchwoman's warming-pan.

The business going forward aboard, right under the eyes of the crowd, was an auction at the ship's mast: which means that one of the crew having died without known heirs or assigns, his effects were being sold for the good of the ship. When this happens at sea the crew bid, each for what he chances to want, and after dispersing the property

in this fashion, go on to share up the money it has fetched. But the skipper of the *Royal Anna* had seized his occasion to draw a knot of longshore citizens into the bidding and run up prices.

He was a cheerful, round, bald-headed man, extremely stout, but active; in a shirt so tight that it had burst across his chest, and breeches so much too wide that the waistband came up to his armpits and the hinder buttons to the nape of his neck. A scarlet patch in the seat revolved into sight and was eclipsed again as he spun around and shouted, now to the onlookers, anon to the crew gathered just abaft the foremast.

"Now here," he shouted, holding up a wire cage with a grey parrot in it—a really handsome bird, "here we have summat to suit all tastes! This bird——"

"Five shillin'," interrupted a voice by the foremast, and there was a note in the voice that struck on my ear strangely, preoccupied though I was. I traced it, or thought I traced it, to a man who had pushed forward a pace in front of the crew; a hulking fellow with an eye missing and a black patch worn askew over the empty socket.

"'Vast there, Nick Brattle!—all in good time,

as Cap'n Kidd said to the gallows. But there, ladies and gentlemen! That 'll show ye what store a simple honest seaman sets by this bird, knowin' its rarity. 'Rarity?' says you. Ah, now we 're comin' to it! Forbye that when so minded he can talk the hind leg off a jackass, before ever the deceased came to own him this here parrot was Joe Nossiter's, an' his fav'rite pet."

"Who was *he?*" someone asked.

The skipper put on a fine air of astonishment.

"Do I hear aright? Or will the company tell me here 's one that never heard of Joe Nossiter? —and him a Bristol man too!"

"Oh, stow your talk!" again growled the one-eyed man, and fiercely.

It seemed to me, eyeing him, that this fellow was afraid of something, even mortally afraid. His villainous face shone with sweat and—so grey it was, too—might have been painted over with a coat of size.

The skipper paid him no heed.

"Never heard tell o' Joe Nossiter!" he went on, "o' Joe Nossiter, that they took out o' the *Royal Fortune* an' hanged at Cape Corse Castle, bein' one o' Roberts's best! Maybe ye han't heard of Roberts?

Nor of Teach ?—and him another Bristol man, more by token. Maybe ye han't even heard tell o' Cap'n Kidd ? Very like I 'm castin' pearls afore swine. But anyways this here bird if he chose—an' who knows but he won't ?—could tell you as how Nossiter got him a legacy from Darby Mullins, that sailed and was hanged along with Kidd himself at Execution Dock ; an' Mullins got him from Hornygold—Cap'n Ben Hornygold—that taught Teach all he knew. An' has it come to this ?—that there ain't a man or woman in Bristol as 'll find a kind home for a bird as has had Teach an' Kidd for shipmates ? Why, *look* at the beauty ? "

The parrot, held aloft for view, cocked his head sideways and scratched it, with an eye on the salesman ; but was saying nothing. I stared at the bird, bethinking me what abominations it had seen if this tale were true, which I doubted.

" Five shillin'," repeated the one-eyed man, seeing his chance.

" Ten ! " challenged a clear voice above me—Mistress Carberry's. Having started to bid, she leaned forward a little and so set the orange-box rocking on the uneven cobbles. She put forth a little hand to steady her balance. It caught at my

shoulder—for I stood close beside, and even at sixteen was more than ordinary tall. There it rested. You may guess how the touch sent fire through me.

Just at that moment I heard a clattering noise, followed by much laughter. The bottom of the cage had dropped out, and the bird, dropping with it and startled by the fall, had fluttered with a squawk for the rigging. It found a perch high on the main shrouds, whence, after eyeing the crowd for a moment, it told us all succinctly to go to h—ll and keep ducks.

"One guinea!" shouted the one-eyed man, springing up the ratlines in pursuit.

"Two!" piped my goddess above me. "I adore parrots."

This one let his pursuer come close and, before dodging aloft to the main-top, found time to give us a piece of advice so obscene that I cannot write it down here. I glanced up at Mistress Carberry, mutely asking permission to withdraw her beyond earshot. Her lips were compressed, but her eyes sparkled.

"Is the bird mine?" asked the one-eyed man, pausing at the edge of the main-top and looking down.

"Two guineas bid!" called up the skipper: "—forbye that ye han't caught him yet."

"Two-an'-a-half!" grunted the seaman. "An' leave the devil to me. I 'll catch him!"

"Three!" called Mistress Carberry.

The bird, hopping off the main-top on to the tops'le braces, edged out of reach along them, took a fluttering leap to the main-tops'le yard (which, as I have said, was canted on a steep slope), another leap to the lifts, and pausing there for a moment, cocked his head again on one side and looked down as if purposely to taunt.

"Kiss me, kiss me, kiss me! O, blast my dead-lights! Billy Loony! *You 'll* never make a seaman!"

The creature called this down with a chuckle you 'd swear was human; and so with a spring found the main-topmast stay and began a sort of tight-rope dance down towards the fore-top. This brought him at one point almost within clutch of the seaman, who had made a dash along the yard. But the bird had calculated his distance with a few inches to spare, and held on his way to the fore-top with a mincing gait that set Mistress Carberry laughing aloud.

"I 'll have that bird, whatever he cost me!" she declared.

The skipper heard her.

"The bid 's agen ye, Nick Brattle," he called; "let be the laugh. Here 's a lady offers three guineas!"

"Let her come and fetch him, then," answered the fellow wrathfully, pausing to mop his brow, while his feet dangled, feeling for the puttock shrouds, to descend. "Three guineas, as the bird stands—is that a bargain?"

"You hear what Nick says, ma'am? Make it five, and I 'll undertake one o' my crew shall catch him for you."

Before she could answer this the small negro at her side looked up and gabbled something. I could not catch the words. But she nodded, and he began forthwith to kick the slippers—they were of yellow leather—off his bare feet.

"Four guineas—as he stands—and not a penny more!" she answered sharply. "Fetch him, Rumbo!"

The black boy made a spring for the fore-chains, caught hold, steadied himself an instant, and was up the ratlines like a cat. At the foot of the puttock

shrouds he paused and held a hand wide. The bird peered over, rubbing his neck dubiously against the edge of the fore-top.

The boy said a word, coaxing. The parrot bent still lower . . . and, a second later, fluttered now to the outstretched wrist, as to a perch.

"Bravo, Rumbo!" Mistress Carberry drew forth a purse and counted out four guineas. "Here! Who will hand these to the captain?"

I, being close to her, stretched up a palm, and she dropped the coins into it, thanking me. As I handed the money over, the black boy sprang ashore and passed me, bearing his prize.

All this happened while yet the one-eyed man was descending the rigging. At the foot of it he turned, holding on by the shrouds; and his jaw dropped. Mistress Carberry was already walking off towards her chair, the boy Rumbo following with the parrot on his wrist.

CHAPTER III

THE MENDED CAGE

NEXT day, a little before noon, as I sat in the back office casting up ledgers (a hateful business), my father came to me from the outer shop with a birdcage in his hand.

"You may drop the accounts," said he, "and tackle this small job. See, the catch of the tray is broken, and the perch wants fixing: also the bird's cup has a dent in it. In short, you had best overhaul the whole outfit."

"That 's easy enough," said I, taking the cage. I recognised it at once.

"Right," said my father. "Only get to work upon it quick, for I have promised that it shall be repaired by five o'clock."

I asked What was the customer's name.? My father did not know; nor did it matter; the seaman who had brought the cage would call for it at five o'clock, and pay.

"A seaman?" I said. "A hulk of a fellow, maybe, with a patch over his right eye?"

Upon this my father sharply charged me with idling and peeping out into the shop through the back office window when I should have been adding up figures. I retorted pretty hotly that I had done nothing of the kind; that in fact I had seen seaman and bird-cage together no longer ago than yesterday, and I hoped there was no harm in putting two with two and making 'em four. Thereupon, clapping the tray under my arm and picking up the cage by its brass ring, I marched off to the workshop in some pretence of dudgeon, but secretly pleased: for this sparring between my father and me had come to be pretty frequent of late, and being conscious in a sullen way that it became me very ill, I was glad to have put him for once in the wrong.

I fell to work savagely, brooding over the injustice and over the iniquity in general of a world wherein parents were permitted to bind their sons to servitude and treat them like dogs. I wondered if my father would miss me when I declined into an early grave, which I had half a mind to do, to spite him. I wondered also, by fits and starts while I worked, why this gallows-looking seaman, Ned Brattle, had been

so keen-set on bidding for a ship's parrot ; and why, having lost the bird, he should bother himself to get the cage mended.

By three o'clock I had finished my repairs. I took the cage to the shop, where my father received it without a word—a sure sign that my behaviour had offended him : and indeed when, after a wash at the pump, I went into the parlour for some food and a drink of cider and found my mother there, her face told me as plainly that she and my father had been having some words about me. Now—though it was nothing to my credit, who so soon and thoughtlessly caused her so many tears—I could never abide to see my mother weep. I blurted out my penitence then and there, yet so that she perceived me to have been unjustly blamed. And after we had made it up (as they say) and I had eaten my bread and cheese, I did what I knew would pleasure her, offering to read to her for half-an-hour and spare her eyes : for in the afternoon she always sat with a book, and that book was ever the Bible. Opening it quite by hazard, I came on the parable of the Prodigal Son, and started upon it unawares, to my no small confusion as I continued reading. But I dare say that to the end of her life the good soul believed me to have

chosen it on purpose, as (could I have seen but a few hours ahead) I could hardly have picked out a story more pertinent.

At five o'clock I returned to the shop, to relieve my father and take charge until closing-time. He was still taciturn, and I put off asking his pardon; so that we parted without an explanation. The parrot's cage still stood on the floor behind the counter in a dark corner. Without well knowing why, I felt strangely curious concerning our one-eyed customer, and, as the time went on, somewhat restive that he still delayed.

The clock of St. Mary's-on-the-Bridge struck six —our closing-time—and still he did not appear. I went to the door for a look to right and left along the Bridge, but could see no sign of him. Dusk was fast gathering, and in some disappointment I went in to fetch the shutters, which stood on a ledge (or rack) by the rear of the shop close by the door of the office.

I was turning about with the first two shutters, when to my amazement I saw the man standing right before me, by the counter. How in this world he could have entered without my hearing him was a puzzler. But there he stood, black

eye-patch and all, between me and the wane of the daylight.

"Pardon, sir," said I (we were always very polite in our shop); "you have come for the parrot's cage?"

"How d'ye know that?" he asked, peering forward in a suspicious way.

I had set down the shutters and was stepping around behind the counter.

"My father told me you would be coming," I explained. "He took your order, and the cage was to be mended and ready for you by half-past five."

"Well, and *is* it ready?"

I lifted it on to the counter and showed him the repairs, as well as I could in the dusk. All the while I was wondering if he recognised me as one who had looked on at the auction (I now know that he did not), and all the while I felt—I cannot tell you how—that the man was in a sweating flurry.

He grunted, seemingly satisfied. "How much to pay?" he asked. I told him a shilling; and he fished the coin out of a twisted skin purse which he drew with great caution from his breeches' pocket. Having paid, he seemed in no hurry to take up the

cage; but, as if on a sudden thought, opened the wire door and worked it once or twice to and fro on its hinge.

"Creaks a bit, don't it?" he asked.

I answered that all such doors were given to creaking, but that it could be set right in a moment with a little sweet oil and a rag: which I brought. He took the saucer and rag from me and anointed not only the hinge but also and very carefully the neck of the brass ring by which the cage was carried.

"That 's better," he announced at length, and, taking up the cage, moved to the door.

All this while, and apart from the man's behaviour, I had been teased with a sense of something queer about him; something for which I could not account. Now in a flash I discovered what it was. His feet made no sound at all. He walked out of the shop and vanished with no more noise than if he had been a ghost.

He was barefoot; either that or shod in list slippers.

While I pondered this, a bright thought struck me. I put up the shutters in haste, and started off at a run for Mistress Carberry's lodgings.

CHAPTER IV

RUMBO'S RIDDLE

MISTRESS CARBERRY lodged at the corner of Queen Square, above a milliner's shop much frequented by the quality. In my hurry I clean forgot that this would be about the time she started for the theatre, and was only reminded of it when, entering the Square, I found the chairmen at her door, with two linkboys, and a small knot of people waiting for a glimpse of her as she came out. The door, in fact, was already open, and a maidservant demanded my business as I pushed my way up to the step. I told her that my news was urgent, and that I must see the lady at once, in private; to which she was very obstinately demurring, when a voice called from within and aloft to know what this altercation meant, and Mistress Carberry herself came down the stairs, with Rumbo in attendance.

"Ah!" she cried, stepping forward. "'Tis my young friend of the auction! I never

forget a face that has good looks to commend it."

"'Tis about the auction, ma'am, that I have made bold to come," said I flushing, but less at the compliment than for confusion to find myself talking to the goddess.

She laughed.

"It seems," said she, "I am not to hear the last of that auction in a hurry. *You* have not come for that parrot, I hope?"

"Ma'am," said I, "'tis about the parrot. I am come, begging your pardon, to warn you; for I think, and with pretty good reason, you are in danger to have him stolen."

"And I on the contrary, sir," she answered, "think with still better reason, that I run no such risk."

"But, ma'am," I went on, sticking to my point, "if you 'll remember, there was a seaman bid against you—a fellow with a patch across his eye."

"Well, indeed, I remember him," she assured me. "Spite of what I said a moment since, 'tis not only good looks I keep in memory."

The more because I worshipped her, she nettled

me, standing there in the passage and smiling me down.

"Well then," I blurted, "that man means to steal the bird. But if you will not be warned——"

"I will not be warned," again she took me up; "and for a very good reason. I gave the bird away this very morning."

"Oh!" said I.

"—and to that very man," added she.

"Oh!" said I again, and it was all the words I could find.

"Why," she rallied me, laughing heartily, "you look as disconsolate as did poor Rumbo when I told him!"

Said I—

"With all respect, ma'am, I have been thinking as that bird may be worth a deal more than his weight in gold. To start with, he has sailed along with Roberts and Kidd. Next, he can talk. You may ask me, to be sure, what worth is a parrot's talk: and that I can't answer you except by another question. Why was the seaman so cast down—as yourself could see—when you outbid him?"

"Undoubtedly the bird can talk," said Mistress Carberry with a twinkle. "He has talked to Rumbo

here, and in Rumbo's own language. . . . But I must not keep the play waiting, or Hippisley will storm my head off"—Hippisley was our great Bristol actor, and owned the theatre. "Come along with me, boy—what is your name?—and we will talk between the acts."

I told her my name, but had to confess that the theatre was not for me, who owned no money nor should until next day. At this and at my chapfallen face she laughed very mirthfully. There were ways of killing a dog besides hanging him, she said, as I should find if I followed her chair to the play-house.

So I did: and stepping out at the stage door she led me to her private dressing-room, where an ancient woman had laid out the attire in which she was to play Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. She was in no hurry to put it on, but told me that in Hippisley's acting-version the audience did not reach Belmont until the Second Act, and therefore we had time to talk.

"So you think, Master Philip," she began, "I may have given a fortune away in that parrot? Well, that's not past belief. Money in my hands is like water, and always was."

"I think," said I, "the bird has hold of some secret that this Nick Brattle would stick at little to get hold of."

"But why?" she asked. "Cannot you get it out of your head that he meant to rob me, when I tell you I gave him the bird? He called this morning with a tale that was fair spoken enough. The parrot had belonged to a dead shipmate, and was a pet on board. He offered to pay me the price I 'd given, and out of his hard earnings."

"But if you gave him the bird," I objected, "why was he wearing list slippers, to fetch it? Or why need he oil the cage door?"

"For a very simple reason," she answered. "I had given him the bird without the bird's consent, and the bird—to use his own honest words—was a devil to bite. It certainly showed a shocking unchristian spirit in his presence, flying up and perching itself on top of the bookcase, where it used language that satisfied me no respectable woman should own it an hour longer than she was obliged. And this was the more strange because it would fly to Rumbo's wrist at any time, and lean its head sideways to be scratched, and up to then its manners had been perfect. Perhaps the sight of Mr.

Brattle suggested a cage, and it was the cage it disliked."

"Perhaps," said I. "At any rate, its behaviour don't quite fit in with Brattle's tale of its being the ship's pet in general. They might have sent someone else."

"All I can say," she replied, "is that he told me the bird could only be caught and caged after nightfall, and then only by taking him unawares: and it seemed to me reasonable. He came and did it about ten minutes before you arrived."

"And he came and left by a back entrance?" I suggested. "I did not meet him coming away."

"Very likely," she agreed, and went on with a laugh, "'Tis certain he went away with the bird; and also with some loss of blood: for that spoilt imp Rumbo called out a warning at the last moment, and the creature managed to use its beak upon Mr. Brattle's fingers. I regret to say that between the language of the pair there was little to choose."

"I would give a whole year's wages," said I, "to know what he wanted with that bird."

Mistress Carberry eyed me while I stood musing and moody. Of a sudden she asked—

"Who or what is Mortallone? Or where?"

"Ma'am?" said I.

"Mortallone," she repeated. "That was the word."

"I never heard it before."

She sent her tirewoman to call Rumbo in from the passage where he kept attendance. The black boy appeared and saluted.

"Rumbo," said his mistress, "'Mortallone' was the word, was it not?"

The boy—he was little more than a child—eyed me for a while, and at first sulkily.

"What matter when bird gone?" he said at length. "Yas, Mortallone."

"What besides?"

"You command me tell?" He asked it slowly, still with his eyes taking stock of me.

"Tell; and be quick, please."

"The other word was——" Here the child rattled off a string of sounds that appeared to me to be gibberish. "Tha 's African," he added, noting my frown.

"African?"

"Tell what it means, child," Mistress Carberry encouraged him.

"It means *Watch fo' de fourth: under water mos' times*," translated Rumbo.

She turned to me and demanded what I made of it. But of course I made nothing of it.

"Nor ever will, I doubt," said she. "But you must leave me now, for Martha here has been fidgeting these ten minutes, and 'tis high time I dressed. Go with Rumbo—he will find you a place somewhere in the wings, where you may watch Shakespeare from the inside—and after the play we will talk more of this."

So I took my leave and followed the black boy, who led me around the back of the stage under great timbers and rolls of canvas, and through a maze of ropes, tackles and traps that meant no more to me than things seen in a dream. The whole place was dingy as a cave, with pitch darkness aloft and above the beams (I could see no roof), and in the dim light about me I discerned people like ghosts flitting to and fro on business that to me was all mystery. They seemed mighty serious about it too.

I tell this because it may go some way towards explaining how my adventure ended. I had never before found myself behind the scenes of a theatre, and no doubt it bred some excitement in me. It

certainly did not (as I am told it does with many) dash either my faith or my wonder. On the contrary, when Rumbo had led me around to a stool beside the prompter, and I looked in upon the bright stage with the actors moving, speaking, making gestures so lifelike, yet so far removed above life, the whole spectacle seemed more enchanting to me than ever.

The prompter—a little dry man—was an enthusiast too. Three or four times he nudged me, with a 'Hear him, now!' or 'Mark Hippisley's face: these are his great lines,' or 'Well taken—Well taken, indeed!' Of Portia he spoke once only, but that was to murmur, 'Genius! Genius! Ah, look, what movement!'

He had hit the right word. Margaret Carberry had beauty and a most tuneful voice; but her movement it was that fairly intoxicated. Whether leaning anxious while Bassanio mused over the caskets, or giving her arms to him, or pointing a hand to the heaven whence mercy descended, or (in the last act) stealing across the moonlight on the turf, always she moved like a goddess, and the play moved with her, attendant, as though she unwove it at will and as the measure of a dance. At the close, when

she told us 'It is almost morning'—those four words only—you could swear that, at the waft of her hand, day broke and the birds burst out singing.

She spied me, and, when the play was over and she had been thrice led out by Hippisley to bow to the house, she came to me.

"Hey!" she said, "is that how you take it?"—for my eyes were full of tears. She laughed, declared that for her part she was thirsty as a whale, and sent off Rumbo to fetch her a pot of porter. "And another for Master Handfast!" she called after him. "He shall drink and tell me if he have solved the riddle."

Now my parents had brought me up very straightly. Cider—and so sour that half a glassful sufficed—was the household drink. I had never tasted porter in my life. I had a notion that my head would not stand it, yet shame and the fear to appear a milksop forbade my crying-off. I took my mug from Rumbo and valiantly imitated Mistress Carberry when she blew off the frothy head from hers. Strange to say, the sight of my divinity preparing to imbide porter gave me no shock at all. I was in a world to-night

where all odd things might happen, yet none be less than heroical.

Mistress Carberry lifted her mug to pledge me.

"To Mortallone! — whatever Mortallone may be."

"To Mortallone!" I repeated, as I buried my nose and drank.

CHAPTER V

I AM POT-VALIANT

I REMEMBER that as I left the theatre the stars shone above me very bright and distinct. My feet bore me with a kind of dancing motion along some intricate streets and even down Baldwin's Stairs to the waterside. Not once did I lurch or stumble. In bidding Mistress Carberry good-night, and thanking her when she bade me pay her another call on the morrow, I had kept entire command of my voice, and kept it yet even to the extent of repressing an urgent desire to sing. By all the tests, then, I was sober—or at any rate, not drunken. But my feet, voice, will, though they belonged to me, seemed to be rather my separate servants than a part of myself: and in short I think it would be a fair account of my condition to say that for the moment—the porter helping—I and the world were exalted beside ourselves. It was, as I remember, a noble frame of mind. I longed—and not only longed but resolved

—to do great deeds. Since these could not be achieved at home in the pewterer's business, I felt no inclination to go home.

Coming to the quays, I slackened pace and fetched a halt abreast of the *Royal Anna.* She lay in her old position, but a little lower, having warped down ahead and clear of two vessels that had blocked her passage to the waterway. The starlight showed me too that her hatches had been fitted and her decks washed down for sea-going. A riding-light on her fore-stay kept an unsteady flicker; and, just as I halted, a dark figure that had been lounging against the poop-rail shambled forward to attend to it. As the man reached up to trim the wick the light fell on his face, and I recognised the skipper.

He must have been listening: for coming aft again, he challenged—

"Who 's there?"

"A friend," said I.

"Then you must be a rarity," he grunted, "for I don't own many. What 's your business?"

"Look here," said I—I have said that my voice just then was no proper part of myself, and the words jumped out before I could collar them—"Look here, do you want a hand?"

For a while he did not appear to have heard, and I was beginning to wonder if I meant it when he answered—

"I do and I don't . . . Wind 's a bit north o' west, as I reckon. How 's it blowin', up the hill? I heard you come down the steps, didn't I? There 's never a true draught, down in this hole."

"But you want a hand, in Dave's place," I urged.

"Dave? What do *you* know of Dave?" he took me up, full of contempt. "Are you the Angel Gabriel by any chance, offering to ship in Dave's place? Dave was a seaman. . . . If you could only cast accounts, now, it might be different."

"But I can," I protested.

"Eh?" said he. "Read, write *and* cipher?"

I assured him I could keep books as well as anyone of my age. He considered this for a while, and asked what I had been doing to get myself into trouble.

"For," said he, "we sail in two hours' time, and I don't want the constables after me, rummaging the ship and maybe dragging me back to give evidence."

I told him that I was in no trouble, but that I was

tired of keeping shop, and must run away to sea : if not with him, then with some other skipper.

"Step aboard," he commanded. On the deck he came close and surveyed me for some time as well as the darkness permitted. "Where 's your duds?" he asked. "Got none? Well, never mind: step along aft here, to my cabin, and I 'll get thee the ship's log to copy, just to see if you are the scholar you boast to be. Reckon if you can satisfy me of that, you 'd best keep below when the pilot comes aboard. Being a Bristol man, he might happen to know your face. Likewise I won't make you acquainted with your shipmates till we 're clear of Kingroad. They might talk."

CHAPTER VI

OUTWARD PASSAGE

In this fashion was I shipped on my first voyage: and about noon next day, as we stood out into the Bristol Channel, Captain Bunce (as his name was) allowed me to come on deck, and sent me forward to learn my trade. The crew there received me with less surprise than I had looked for. They were ten in all, and, excepting Nick Brattle, I may say at once that I have never sailed with a better disposed lot of seamen. Nay, at this point it is scarcely fair to except Brattle, against whom I knew nothing, nor discovered anything during the whole outward passage.

It was pretty clear he did not recognise me for the lad he had talked with in the dark shop: and if he showed himself surlier than the others, 'twas belike because he was born surly, and could help it no more than he could help his villainous face. Anyhow, he treated me fairly enough.

The one man with whom I made no weather at all was the mate, Mr. Saundry, who had taken a dislike to me on several counts. I had as yet not the beginnings of a seaman, nor—as he vowed—the makings of one. It angered him, too, that Captain Bunce had shipped me without consulting him; and I think it specially angered him that I had been shipped as a useful fellow to look after the ship's writings and accounts; for on the previous voyage this had been his job, and from my perusal of the papers and files, as well as from the master's very outspoken talk, there could be no doubt he had bungled it.

Here I should tell that our trade was that of pretty near half the Bristol owned vessels of those days—that is, bating privateers. We were bound first for the Gold Coast with a general cargo of made goods, to trade along the factories there; lightening our load bit by bit until we reached Whydah (as we hoped) with a clean hold. At Whydah we were to purchase negroes—the number would depend on the success of our coastwise commerce—and carry them over to Barbadoes or yet farther, to Jamaica, to work the plantations. This was known as the Middle Passage: and the last passage would be homeward,

with a hold full of tobacco, sugar, cotton, ginger, or whatever else we could buy to advantage in the West Indies. There might be some ivory, too, if we had happened to do well with our African trading.

Our outward cargo this time consisted very largely of gunpowder. It was with gunpowder the decks had been so dirty on the day of auction. Now this being a novel venture—and, I might add, no very creditable one, for the powder would be peddled to the natives, and supply them with means of killing one another—the mate distrusted it, and he was fearful also of danger to the ship.

The second day out, having to correct some unseamanlike hitch of mine, and within earshot of the master, Mr. Saundry took occasion to lift his voice and tell me that such a fool trick, in a breeze of wind, might cost us the ship.

"But there!" he went on as loudly. "'Twill make little difference to some of us what 's done or undone—sailing with a thirteenth man aboard."

This, of course, was a slap at the master for having shipped me; and Captain Bunce took it as such.

"Why," said he, coming forward, "what old woman's notion is this, Saundry? Thirteen on

board ? As if we hadn't been thirteen all last voyage, right down to the day poor Dave died ! "

"Aye, and that 's where Dave found out the mistake of it," answered the mate. "Nor Dave won't be the last, you mark my words."

Indeed, to make a short story of our outward passage, which had no other event worth telling, the poor man was soon to prove the force of his argument. He was in no good state of health to start with ; and a great part of his apprehensions (and maybe of his irritable temper, too) arose out of this ; for the crew agreed that he had been a bold seaman as well as capable in his day. Beyond the twentieth parallel—where we lay becalmed for a week almost in sight of the coast, and could feel the heat beating off it, though it brought no breeze—he sickened rapidly. He knew himself to be dying, and had a great fancy to be buried on shore : and this indeed happened, for he held out until noon of the day we sighted Sino—which makes with sight of a tree like a ship's mast with topsail loose. There we rowed his body ashore, and got permission to bury it. At Sino also we traded a couple of brass cups for about three hundred pounds of pepper to mix with the food for the negroes we were to pick up farther

along the coast. That same evening the master promoted Nick Brattle to fill the dead mate's shoes and sleep in his cabin aft: which was reasonable, Brattle being the best seaman on board, and the only one with a smattering of navigation.

Now I should tell you that Captain Bunce had, soon after starting, appointed me to be his servant after a sort: that is to fetch his meals, clean out his quarters, and do other such jobs. It may be that he found me willing and somewhat more refined than the others by reason of my upbringing; or it may be that the old man did it in obstinacy, to back up his rashness in shipping me. At all events, his servant I was, and the mate's too; Mr. Saundry having tolerated me on the less flattering ground that it kept me from playing the landsman forward.

I should tell you, too, that the parrot—though removed every night to the forecastle—had from the first spent the greater part of every fine day on deck; its cage being hung in the lower rigging, or sometimes (to pleasure the master) lashed close against the rail of the poop—whence, when the master tired of its talk or went below for a meal, the bird would exchange a deal of ribald talk with the helmsman. Here I, having the run of the pantry

stores, could at any time coax it with a lump of sugar. In short, we had become pretty good friends; and now that the bird had its lodging aft, I took many occasions to better the acquaintance.

Against Brattle (do what he would) it maintained an unconquered aversion. Us others it cursed cheerfully, without spite: but in his presence it ever kept silence, content to watch him with a wicked, vindictive eye, and hold its beak ready against all coaxings or caresses.

Yet one thing more I must tell: that though pretty well assured he had no recollection of me, once or twice I had caught the new mate's one eye following me in a furtive way, as if his mind played with a question it could not solve.

I will say this for him, that he made a better mate than the men forward had expected. While on equal terms with us he had sometimes afflicted the whole forecastle with talk that, while outraging God, went a little beyond decent men's endurance. But now he kept to himself, and his tongue was the tongue of an officer, and confined itself to our shortcomings.

We passed Cape Palmas and worked along the Ivory Coast, touching here and there, and doing a

fair trade on the whole. At the Dutch fort of Axem we got rid of a portion of our gunpowder by a deal with the Governor—though by buying of us he broke the rules of his Company. The main part of it we landed at the English fort at Succandy; and so, with a pretty clean hold and a good weight of tusks aboard, we came to Whydah, and went ashore to buy our negroes.

It happened that a few days before—our ship then reaching easily along the Alampa coast, a bare league from shore—I had gone in to make straight the mate's berth, and as usual I had a lump of sugar with me for the parrot. The bird, as usual when I entered, cocked his head aside and invited me with a "*Scratch poor Poll—pretty Poll!*"—and then with a favourite cry of his—"*I've seen better days, better days, better days!*"

To-day when, having given him his sugar, I pushed a finger between the bars, and he slanted his head aside to be scratched, he followed this up with a string of outlandish words, sinking his voice and purring them out affectionately, much as a ring-dove croons to his mate. They had no meaning for me but this—that quite likely they were the same words he had confided to the boy Rumbo.

I stood very still, my heart beating, my finger at work, softly, persuasively tickling the creature's poll.

It was plain that he accepted me for a friend. He rubbed his head against the tickling luxuriously, and after a dozen seconds or so repeated his phrase : "*Mugbrea calir—r—*"—so I made it out—"*esa kwa pelu moitee—*"

This I made him repeat half a dozen times until the sound of it, syllable by syllable, was fairly well fixed in my head. All of a sudden he surprised me by drawing away sharply from the caress and squawking out—

"*Tonga baimu ! Tonga esa tonga baimu !*"

And on top of this with a screech, ruffling his feathers and drawing himself upright on the perch—

"Mortallone ! Mort—allone !"

I fell back a pace. Of one thing this last cry convinced me : the bird was telling to me, as to a friend, what he had told to the boy Rumbo.

"Mortallone ?" This was the one Christian-sounding word in his speech. But what in the world did it mean ? What did any of the words mean ?

I had drawn my finger away, and stood staring at the cage ; but turned, on a slight noise behind me.

The door had opened quietly, and on the threshold stood Nick Brattle.

In his eyes, which were watching me, I caught for a moment the furtive look that had already puzzled me once or twice.

The queer thing was that whereas I ought to have shown myself the worse confused (and indeed I felt guilty without well knowing why) he was the one to shift his eyes and to blink.

"Gettin' the bird to talk, eh?" he asked, affecting to be careless and to search around for something he had lost or mislaid. "Gettin' the bird to talk, were we?" he repeated after a bit and angrily. "Gettin' him to blab, I dare say; or hopin' to?" With each question he seemed to work up his temper. He stopped short in his feigned search and rounded upon me, but still kept his sideways look. "Now see here, young Handfast! That bird's mine, and I don't allow him to talk. That's plain speakin', I hope, and don't you forget it."

"If the bird chooses to talk," said I, "perhaps you'll tell me how to hinder him?"

"Eh?" said he, changing his tune again and playing careless. "So he *was* talking? What did he say?"

"Oh," said I truthfully, but not too honestly, "a lot of heathen gibberish I didn't understand."

He considered this for a moment or two before answering.

"Well, and you 'd best not try," he said at length, with a short evil look. "'Twouldn't be healthy for you, I reckon. Let me catch you foolin' round that bird again, and I 'll cut your liver out. D'ye hear?"

"Aye, aye, sir," said I very respectfully, and left the cabin. The man did not frighten me. I had an inkling he was a coward in grain.

CHAPTER VII

THE SIGN OF THE DANDY ROVER

AFTER this I have nothing to tell of our voyage until we came to Whydah.

Whydah lies in an unholy swamp set about with trees and backed with hills as pretty as the heart could wish. We made our landfall of it at sunrise; but by reason of a light baffling breeze off the shore it was not till past eight bells of the afternoon that we dropped anchor off the factory: the shore and the factory buildings shining up like gold against the sun, but the place looking all forsaken, and not a sail in the roadstead.

It was not all deserted, however; for, as we made ready to take in sail, Captain Bunce lowered his glass with a chuckle, and then (as though the joke were too good to be lost) passed it to me, that was standing by uncertain whether to run and clear away his dinner or wait for word to go aloft.

"The old double-dealer!" said he, chuckling

again. "To the left there—see him?—where the ladder stands against the dwellin'-house."

I looked, and made out at the foot of the ladder a short, bandy-legged man with a board under his arm. While I kept the glass on him he disappeared within the house.

"See him? That 's King Flanders, and the worst anointed old blackguard along the coast. He 's been taking down his sign."

"But, sir, there 's a signboard over the door."

"—Changing it, I should ha' said. You 'll find King George's head there when we go ashore—lookin' as modest as a maid. Terrible confusin' it is for the old villain, the *Protestant* and the *Royal Anna* bein' sister ships and as like as peas, and the *Protestant* loving King George as the devil loves holy water."

I asked him, What was the other signboard? But this he would not tell me. I learned afterwards that he—and indeed all the respectable captains trading on the coast—had a soft spot in the heart for King Flanders; and, moreover, to stand well with him greatly assisted honest traffic.

This extraordinary man took his name from his native country, having been born at Dixmude: but for longer than any could recollect (certainly

for thirty years and more) he had lived with half a dozen wives—some black, others tawny—in a swamp that as a rule could be warranted to kill any white man in six months: and moreover in all this while had daily drunk Holland's water to excess. It was his fancy to call his residence a tavern; whereby he took toll on a hospitality which other factories along the coast offered without expectation of payment; and yet I could never discover that any seaman thought the worse of him for this hobby. But his real trade was negroes, whom he kept in a long barracks at the back of the house, on a pretty slope among the orange trees.

It happened that three ships had sailed out of Whydah the week before we arrived, and all had traded: to the effect that just now the old villain had but forty slaves in barracks, and these mostly unsaleable. But he assured Captain Bunce that one of his sons-in-law (sons did not thrive with him), a head-man in Dahomey, might be looked for within the week, and would bring a specially fine consignment down from the hills. So we waited: and while we waited the whole crew drank of King Flanders' liquor, but especially Nick Brattle, who soaked the day long in a fashion that plainly told why, good

seaman as he was, he had spent all his life before the mast. Indeed, had not the old man's son-in-law been punctual to a day with his negroes, I verily believe that Captain Bunce would have had to bury the second of his mates, and I should either have no story to tell or be telling a very different one.

This toping vexed the skipper almost to distraction. But Brattle in his cups was a difficult fellow to cross; and, moreover, to interfere might have led to a quarrel with King Flanders, who had welcomed the mate as an old acquaintance, and kept him plied with liquor. The two would sit together for hours in the 'King's' private parlour, talking sociably; and the skipper explained to me that, they being thus thick, there was nothing to do but (as he put it) 'copy St. Paul, cast out four anchors, and wish for day'—meaning the arrival of the negroes. Somehow it had come to be understood that, as cabin boy, I was in charge of the man, to get him home at night to the ship and to bed, and to see that he came to no harm on the way. For this purpose I had the smallest of the ship's boats—the dinghy—at my disposal; and would steady Brattle down to the shore, get him off as best I could, and row him aboard, maybe a couple of hours after the rest of the crew

(all pretty well drunk) had returned in the long-boat. You see, my stomach was young enough to abhor King Flanders's villainous schnapps: and finding me civil and handy, Brattle himself got in the way of trusting to me as a child trusts his nurse.

Thus it happened that one night about eleven o'clock—the crew having put off for the ship a good hour before—I was left yawning and kicking my heels alone in the common drinking-room, when old King Flanders thrust in a head and called to me to come into the parlour, where he and the mate had been soaking since sundown. I found Brattle there, half asleep, with his arms resting on the table and his head nodding.

The old man poured me out a glass of Hollands.

"A little stiffenin' 'll do ye no harm," he said. "'Reckon you 've your work cut out for ye. Our friend 's no company at all to-night."

Upon this Brattle grew very clear-headed of a sudden (as drunkards will); and said he, stiffening himself up fiercely—

"Who says that I 'm poor company?"

"I do, to be sure," answered the old man, not at all perturbed: "though I mean no blame by it. You sleep aft at last, Nick Brattle, which is more

than I ever expected ye to come to; and ye 've a nice considerate skipper, and a crew of decent men. But Lord love ye! it must be dull for a man that has sailed with Roberts, and with Buck Davis, and with Mike Mullins, if I remember, that was half-brother to Darby and bosom-friend to Nossiter. Eh?—What men! What men there was in them times!"

"But you said I was poor company," persisted Brattle unappeased.

"And so ye might be," answered King Flanders genially, with a wink at me; "and twice as dull ye might be, and yet welcome for old days' sake. Eh—What days! What men! . . . This here boy now (and a strapping fine man he 'll make), here he stands with all the world afore him, as he thinks. But what chance he 'll ever see the likes o' what you and me have seen, Nick Brattle? Damme, there 's times I wonder why I go on cumberin' the earth. . . . Remember Roberts, and the ships he took in these very roads?—Was you in that action? . . . But the trade 's dead, or as good as dead."

Brattle, though drunk, shot an uneasy glance at me. Plainly he had sense enough to be embarrassed by this talk.

But either King Flanders had, as he hinted, so far done with life as to be careless of disclosing the past; or he reckoned the past a mere thing of history, folded away, to be taken out from time to time and gloated over without risk.

"The trade 's dead," he went on, filling a pipe. "There 's one here and there, like the *Protestant*—but what does it amount to? And what sort are they that carries it on? And where 's their self-respect? Tarry sailors they are, and not a gentleman o' fortune amongst them. Think of Teach, with the pistols stuck all over him, and the matches for curl papers in his whiskers! Or think of Roberts, with his ruffles and the little pen-knife to clean his nails! If I hang out the old sign—as I did, mistaking ye for the *Protestant* in the offing—'tis for sentiment only, as ye may say."

He stepped to the wall, stooped, and with a great effort—for his shape was pursy—lifted a heavy picture which rested against the wainscot-skirting.

"No harm in letting the lad have sight of it," he panted, laying the signboard—for a signboard it was, with iron pintles in the dark oaken framework—flat on the table. "He deserves something for the way he 's played lady's-maid upon ye these four

nights: and here 's summat he never set eyes on in life, nor ever will. Step close, lad, and make acquaintance with the Dandy Rover."

The painting—very boldly done on panel—represented a pirate, and the completest I had ever imagined, even in dreams. He sat on an inverted bucket on a waste piece of shore, with his musket at his feet, and no company between it and the empty horizon but his bottle and pack of playing cards—the Devil's Bible, as my poor mother always termed them. A number of cards, too, lay strewn on the sand at his feet. He had but one hand—his left; the right wrist being but a stump armed with a murderous-looking hook. What with this hook, and an eye-patch (very like Brattle's), and a handkerchief bound askew over a wound on his forehead, and even a skull and crossbones tattooed upon his forearm, he might pass for all the pirates in the world rolled into one; and that I took to be the painter's meaning.

"Well, lad," said King Flanders, as I stooped over the signboard to admire it, "what say ye to that for a gallows' ornament?"

I told him that it seemed to me a very thorough-going piece of work.

"But I don't quite understand, sir, what game he 's supposed to be playing, nor why those cards should be lying about his feet—unless maybe they are tricks he has taken and can't gather up with his stump."

"You 're an observant youngster," said King Flanders. "Suppose you take a good look at them cards and try again. Notice anything about 'em?"

"Why, sir," said I, "they 're pretty low cards mostly."

"That 's so," said he; "and that 's the parable, as you might put it. The boys call my shop the Dandy Rover, but 'tain't its real name. Its real name 's The Strong Hand—that bein' the trade motto of the man as sat for the picture, and afterwards made me a present o't. See?"

"You don't tell me, sir," said I, "that this was ever a real man!"

"A real man and a famous," he assured me.

"Not Roberts?" I guessed.

At this the old man fairly snorted.

"Roberts! Silk stockin's and a lace handkerchief—that was Roberts; and on great occasions a servant at hand with snuff-box and a bottle of essence. No, sir; this was Bat Hornygold, Ben's younger brother, and as good a seaman every inch.

Not much lace handkerchief about Bat—and now you mention it, I 've seen him stand up and call Roberts a lackey to his face—' a ladies' footman,' he called him too, and Roberts took it without showin' fight. You see, Bat overran it a trifle on the other tack, did the death-and-bones business a bit outside the yard-arm, as we say. Partly by consequence the two could never hit it. But good men they were, the both—here 's to their mem'ries !—and the both cheated the gallows in the end."

" What became of him ? " I asked.

" Ah ! " said King Flanders with an affectionate look down at the portrait. " There 's a mint o' men would like the answer to *that*. What became o' ye, eh, Bat Hornygold ? And where did ye hide your savin's, my buck ? " The old man turned about and faced me. " There 's a yarn—Nossiter's crew picked it up—as a nigger killed him somewhere's in the Bay o' Honduras. He 'd landed with eight men in a pinnace, havin' found a likely spot to bury the dust. But, afore he 'd finished, he 'd buried (so the story goes) the human dust likewise ; every man Jack of 'em, barrin' this nigger. Maybe he was careless over the nigger, reckonin' as these heathens don't set much store by treasure : but

this one did, an' got in first blow. Or maybe the black devil argued as his turn would likely come next, as likely it would."

"What became of the nigger?" I asked.

King Flanders shrugged his shoulders.

"You 'd better wake up Nick Brattle an' put the question. He was in Nossiter's ship, that picked up the story."

But here, at the mention of his own name, Brattle—that had been snoring with his head on his arms—came out of sleep with a start and looked up drunkenly—asking what we wanted of him.

"This lad o' yours," said King Flanders, "was wantin' to know what became o' the nigger as killed Bat Hornygold on the Isle o'—let me see—Mortallone. Wasn' that the place?"

Nick Brattle jumped up staring; cursing, too, and feeling in his belt for a pistol. But this, as on previous nights, King Flanders had thoughtfully removed and given over to my keeping.

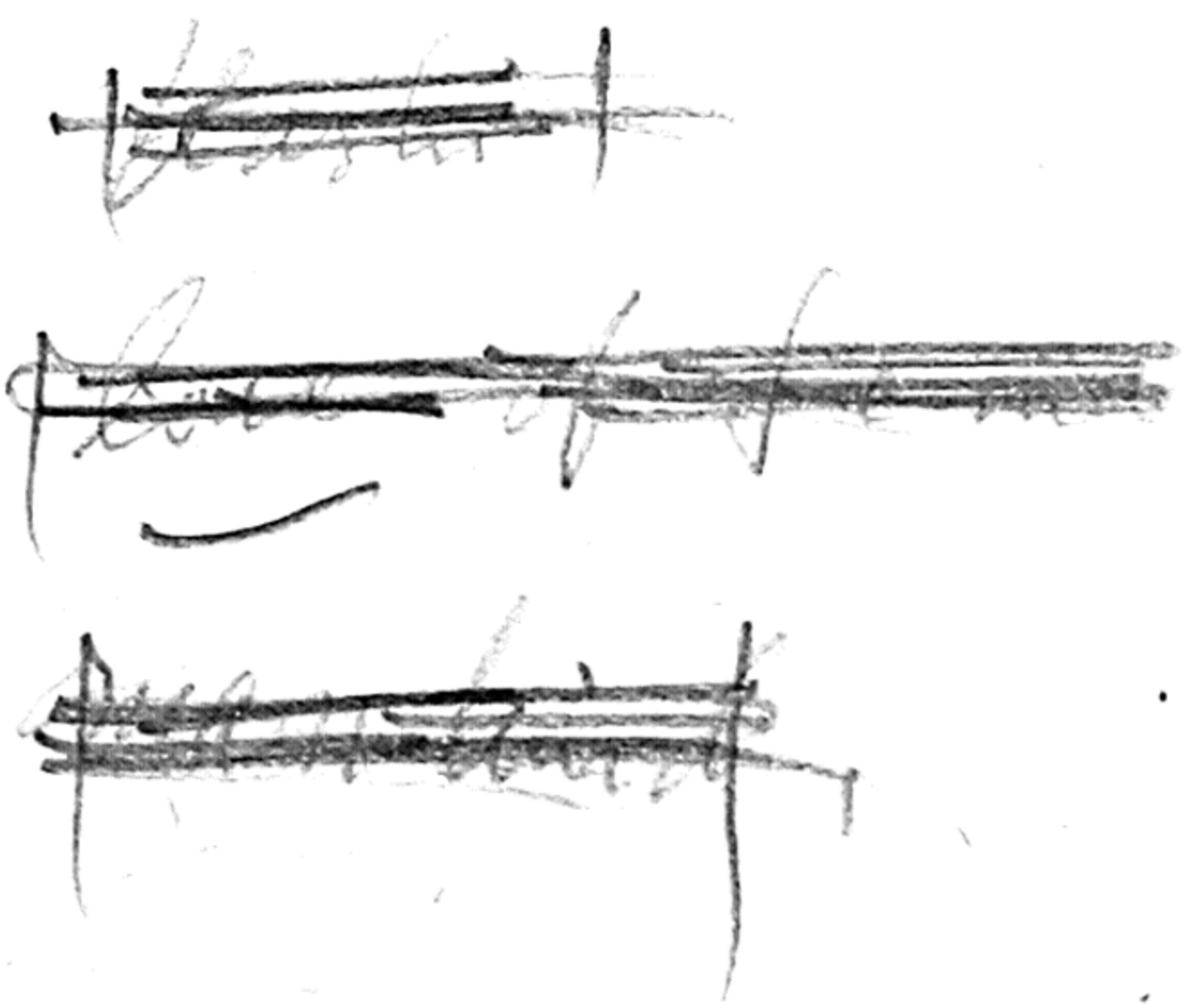
"Up helm there, Nick my man!" he said kindly. "You 've been pointin' a bit too close to the shakes. She 'll be in irons, next news, and you 'll be seein' things, as well as hearin' 'em."

Brattle still stared about him, wildly, out of bloodshot eyes.

"Mortallone?" he growled. "Who said it?"

"Ay, who?—Who indeed?" King Flanders soothed him, with a wink at me. "You've been hearin' things, Nick: I didn' guess 'twas so close with you. Best let the lad take ye quiet an' steer ye down to the boat."

—Which, strange to say, Brattle allowed me to do. The shakes (as King Flanders had said) were upon him, and his madness had turned to a terror of himself.



CHAPTER VIII

MIDDLE PASSAGE

THERE is little more to be told of our stay at Whydah. The head-man, King Flanders's son-in-law, marched in next day with four hundred negroes of both sexes, and Captain Bunce started the bargaining, while I kept tally for him and entered up the prices, very alert all the while to pick up what wrinkles I could of a trade on which so much of the wealth of Bristol depended. While this was doing, Brattle kept to his bunk, greatly to the skipper's relief.

Captain Bunce did indeed suggest my removing the parrot from the sick man's cabin, that the bird's talk might not break his sleep. I told him that Brattle would never consent to this; and, moreover, that it was solicitude thrown away, for the bird would never speak a word in its owner's presence.

One thing I must mention. The most of the bargaining was carried on between our skipper and

King Flanders. But the son-in-law (a fine upstanding black) could speak a broken English pretty fluently; and having made friends with him, I took occasion to ask him what the words *Magbwa cattra* might mean in any language of the coast. He made me repeat the words once or twice—at which I was not surprised, having learnt them from a parrot—but in the end told me that, whatever it might convey, the translation was simple enough. The words meant *Look out for, four.* He added that, as I pronounced them, the words were in the dialect of the Alanda tribe, some fifty leagues to northward: and on my taking his opinion of these Alandas, said they were untrustworthy and weak on the whole; but that now and then they bred fine single-handed warriors, 'the best of any.'

I had now good confirmation that Rumbo and I had learnt the same words from the parrot, and that the boy had faithfully interpreted them. Therefore I forbore from troubling my new acquaintance with the remainder of this sentence, not wishing to disclose more than was necessary. But I could not afford to miss asking him to translate the second—*Tonga baimu, tonga asa tonga baimu.* He told me that it meant *I kill the captain* (or

headman) : *I am killed unless I kill the captain*—and he seemed suspicious about this, asking if I had overheard this from some of his own negroes ; for (said he) it might easily happen that two or three of them knew the Alanda's language, and would choose to converse in it, for secrecy, if they were plotting mischief. I assured him, however, that I had come by the words farther up the coast.

We sailed, then, from Whydah, with our blacks on board, and made our Middle Passage very prosperously to Barbados, in the healthiest season of the year, so that we buried not more than half a dozen on the way. During the first week Brattle kept to his bunk : and when he came on deck again and took up his duties, it was plain to me that the man had still to make a tedious recovery. He would lose his speech in the middle of giving an order ; or would pick up a slack of rope and start aimlessly coiling it, only to drop the job half-way and pace the deck, muttering something to himself. With the skipper (who used him kindly throughout) he seldom passed a word, though always civil enough in his manner.

At Barbados we sold one-half of our slaves, and sailed thence to Port Royal, with intention to

dispose of the rest. But finding the market poor, and being in no way pressed for time, the captain determined to run up for Carolina, where prices were good by reason of the danger of getting a cargo past the Spanish *guarda-costas*. I am not sure if he took this resolve on his own motion or after consulting with Brattle, who had drunk moderately when ashore at Barbados, and seemed (for the time at all events) to profit more by this than by holding off the liquor altogether. I suspect the enterprise was Brattle's from the first, as his was the suggestion that—the *Royal Anna* being committed to the adventure, and our blood up for it, as they say—we might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, and attempt on our way to run a bargain with the logwood-cutters in Campeachy Bay: for although these men are Spaniards, and forbidden to sell to any but their own nation, they will—the market of logwood being thus kept narrow—dare a great deal for any bold foreigner willing to dare more.

Yet I am pretty sure he never intended this venture, and only put it into the captain's head as a means of working nearer to the coast and so furthering a design of which the next move was certainly his, though none suspected him at the time.

We had left Jamaica on the 2nd of October, and had been scarce eight days at sea when all the water on board was found to be infected with some drug that caused the most painful retching and purging. The precise cause nobody knew, but all blamed it upon some one of the negroes, whom Captain Bunce in kindness had relieved of their fetters. Blame it upon whom we would, there we were in a ship without a gallon of drinking water; and the skipper listened readily enough to Brattle, who told him that being off the Bay of Honduras, he could bring her in two days to an island where was the best water in the world.

This he did, too, making an island called (as I think) Roatan, where the long-boat fetched off a good supply. At this work we toiled through a long afternoon until sunset, when someone raised an alarm of a sail among the islands with which the bay was studded to windward; and Captain Bunce, fearing *guarda-costas*, gave orders at once (all the casks being now replenished and on board) to run for an offing, not staying to hoist in the long-boat, but towing her astern.

Away then we went before a light off-shore breeze, pretty steady; Brattle taking the helm, on a

warning of his own that the navigation was tricky among the islands hereabouts. After a couple of hours' steering, he called down to be relieved, and the captain, coming up, set me to take the wheel, himself standing by and conning the ship; whereupon Brattle went below for a meal, assuring us as he went that, as we held now, it was all plain sailing with nothing but open water ahead.

By this time it was night, of course; a clear starry night, without moon; the sea full of briming* and smooth as a pond. I had been steering for half an hour, maybe, when the captain steps to the taffrail and peers over at the long-boat astern.

"My lad," says he, "we may have dodged that Spaniard, and again we may not. Happen he should sight us in the morning, the quicker we get in the boat and stow her, the better: and, anyway, the water that 's in her don't help our speed—the casks have been leaking into her all this day till she 's full up to the bottom-boards. What d 'ye say, lad, to droppin' down the ladder that 's over-stern and takin' a trick with the baler? I 'll take the helm while you 're about it."

That was just his easy way of talking.

* Phosphorescence.

I was ready enough, of course. I got out upon the ladder, dropped into the boat, and settling myself aft, found the baler under the stern-sheets and started to work. She was pretty full of water as the captain had promised, and it cost me close upon an hour to get her properly dry. At the end of the job I had a mind to wait a few minutes before climbing back on board to take up my trick at the wheel. I had been straining my loins all the afternoon, though, trundling water casks with the rest, and was in fact nodding with weariness and desire to sleep. It would be fine to sit quiet here for a while and enjoy being towed along under the stars. But a very little star-gazing sufficed me before my eyes closed themselves comfortably.

A slight sound fetched me awake, and I opened them, in doubt for a moment of my bearings. I was in the boat, and the boat still travelled in wake and under shadow of the *Royal Anna*. The sound had come from somewhere forward, beneath the loom of her stern—as it seemed to me, from the fore-thwart: and the boat kept a slight pitching motion as if some heavy weight had been dropped into her forward.

I sat up and listened, holding my body stiff from

the waist up: and, sitting so, I heard a man creep aft towards me in the darkness across the thwarts. In another moment, it seemed, he would blunder straight into me. But at the stroke-thwart he paused, reached across it, and set down at my feet a tall bundle that he carried. The base of the bundle actually struck against my knees, as I curled back my bare toes under the stern-sheets, and it jarred at the touch with a sound for which I could not by any means account—a sound of metal. While I taxed myself to guess what the man could be doing, he stole forward again. A moment later I heard the ropes of the ladder creak softly with his weight as he climbed back to the ship.

Left to myself, I put out my hands and felt the bundle over. It was the parrot's cage, in the covering of canvas that Brattle slipped over it every night.

I started to think things out, and pretty rapidly. The man must either be Brattle or someone playing a trick upon Brattle's parrot—stealing it, maybe. But I could see no object in such a theft, nor did I reckon any one of the crew to be capable of it. Moreover in these waters, and with a few leagues

only dividing them from the *guarda costa*, it was certain that skipper and mate in turn would keep the deck all night, and no one could clamber over the taffrail without being observed by one or the other. No: I felt pretty certain that this must be Brattle; and that, having relieved the captain and got rid of him below, he had lashed the wheel and was playing this game alone, whatever it might be.

But what could be the meaning of it? Well (thought I) the meaning after all may be very simple. Maybe the bird had disturbed him in his cabin, and he had brought it out here to spend the night and learn better behaviour.

I was not satisfied, however; and resolved that I would not go back to the ship just yet, but keep watch for a while. My difficulty was that, if Brattle returned, he would to a certainty discover me here in the stern-sheets. Casting about for a place of concealment, I bethought me that the space between the long-boat's stem and her bow-thwart (which had a hole for stepping the mast) was boarded over, and that under these boards I might creep and coil myself somehow. This I did accordingly, with the least noise I could contrive, crawling past the

parrot's cage and forward over a tangle of rope, spars and canvas where the boat's sail had been stowed in a hurry upon the alarm ; and so squeezed myself into the cuddy—as I will call it, though you will understand that it had no bulkhead or partition of any kind below the thwart.

I had scarcely coiled my limbs in tolerable comfort before the ladder creaked again, and a foot—a shoeless foot—brought down its weight with a soft thud on the board just over my head. From this the man stepped down into the boat, and, moving aft, set down (as it seemed to me) two bundles or parcels, the one soft, the other hard—I heard a light rap, as of wood or metal upon the bottom boards. Having deposited these parcels, he came forward again, and knelt for half a minute or so on the bow-thwart, so close above me that by reaching out a hand I could have grasped him by the naked ankle. I listened with all my ears. I could see nothing of him but his ankles and dangling feet against the night. His body reached forward close over me, with but half an inch of board between us.

Then of a sudden, without hearing, I knew what he was about ; or rather, what he had just done.

He had cut the painter through.

I had a mind to crawl out (as my duty was) and call after the ship. It was not fear—I can honestly say it—that held me still. Had I thought of a struggle with Brattle and reckoned up the chances, they were all in my favour. Weight for weight I was his match, or almost, in spite of my years; and drink had enfeebled him. I should have taken him clean by surprise, too; and by gripping his ankles have held him at mercy while I shouted.

But I thought neither of these things nor—it shames me to say—of my plain duty. I saw myself, adrift here with Brattle and his parrot, on the edge of a discovery to which all this voyage had been leading me; and my mind, instead of rousing me to take action, played foolishly back to the auction by Bristol Quay and to Mistress Carberry. I wondered what she would say, at this moment, could she look across all these leagues of sea and behold me still holding to the clue. Donkey that I was, I even felt proud of myself.

So I lay still, while Brattle—it was certainly Brattle—drew back from his kneeling posture, lowered his feet and stood erect, doubtless gazing after the ship.

I heard him heave a sigh as he turned and crept aft. For a minute or so he busied himself arranging his parcels and stowing them. Then he settled himself down in the stern-sheets, and for a while—as it seemed to me, twenty minutes at least—sat there without moving.

CHAPTER IX

THE ISLAND

THIS was long enough to give me, in my hiding-place, an intolerable cramp; and I had partly uncoiled my legs, to stretch them for ease beyond the thwart, when Brattle arose from his seat and came forward again: but now with no care for the noise he made in blundering against the thwarts and spars, for of course he judged himself to be well beyond earshot of the ship.

I had drawn back my feet quickly, without sound, and in good time: but one thing I had forgot—that the square socket, made to hold the foot of the mast, lay right beneath me, and that in fact my left ankle covered it at this moment: a forgetfulness for which I paid dearly. For (his business being now to hoist sail) he first of all found the boat's mast and cleared it of all cumber; and next, lifting and inserting its foot through the hole in the bow-thwart, he threw his weight on it, to bring it down

tight into the step—but, instead, brought it down cruelly upon my ankle. The pain was hideous, and for a moment I made sure the bone was broken.

But setting my teeth on the anguish of it, I managed to catch and choke the cry I had almost let out. If I did let out the beginnings of a groan, the rattle of the mast against its socket must have covered the sound; for Brattle, finding that the foot would not fit home, bent down and thrust a hand under the thwart to clear the step, no doubt supposing it to be fouled by some end of rope or stray thole-pin. His fingers, as they groped, actually felt along the edge of my bent right knee.

Satisfied at length that the step was clear, he arose, took hold of the mast, and again rammed it down. This time it fitted, and I heard him breathe hard over his success.

He had now to hoist sail; which he did very leisurably, spitting on his hand and swigging on the uphaul till he had it chock-a-block, again swigging as he tautened down the tack, and yet again twice tautening the tack-rope about the bitts under the second after-thwart, till he had all set up to his liking. The sail mostly drowned the noise of these

operations by its flapping: but quietness fell as he stepped aft and drew in the sheet.

This he pinned (as in so light a breeze he might safely do), having first touched his helm and brought the wind fair on her beam: and so he held her for a few minutes, while he trimmed the sheet to his judgment. She felt the wind and began to skip, reaching off on a course that, as the *Royal Anna* was sailing (on a dead run, with all canvas set, even to her stun-sails), would remove us from her horizon long before daybreak. These small operations took all his attention; and, with the boat's length between us, I made bold to ease my posture a little, and stretched myself prone, with my feet to the bows and my shoulders extending well beyond the bow-thwart, so that I could rest my elbows on the bottom boards, prop my chin on my hands, and keep watch. This not only relieved me of the cramp, which had been distressing, but would allow me to spring erect at short notice and defend myself if need should be.

For an hour or more he sat without motion, steering down into the darkness; then (judging, no doubt, that he had put sufficient distance between him and the ship) he downed helm and ran the boat up into the wind. I worked myself a little farther beyond

the thwart—which for the moment I could do with little risk; for again the flapping of the sail would cover any small noise forward—with the double purpose to watch him more closely and to grope for a spare tiller which I remembered to have seen lying somewhere amidships; but in my search for this very rude weapon I ducked my head suddenly, at the sharp sound of flint upon steel.

He was striking a light. He had the tinder-box on his knees; and as he blew the tinder up the glow lit his face. The light glanced, moreover, on a couple of gun-barrels close beside him, and for the first time it occurred to me that I had accepted very serious odds. I drew back again towards my hiding as he lit a match and held it over a small binnacle, or boat's compass, fitted in a case with a lamp affixed to shine inward. This lamp he lit and trimmed carefully; and so, getting out a paddle, pushed the boat's nose around to take the wind. She paid off, and in half-a-minute we were away again, reaching down into the darkness.

Of the next hour and more I have nothing to report, save that twice and again he drew out a paper or parchment from his breast-pocket and unfolding it sideways by the binnacle light, perused it carefully

for a minute or so. For the rest, he held the boat steadily on her course. I began to let sleep overpower me; for the day's work (as I have said) had left me sore with weariness. At length I succumbed. My wrists ached somewhat with propping my chin: yielding to the temptation to ease them, I stretched my forearms along the floor of the boat, let my forehead drop upon them, and on the instant was fast asleep.

By good fortune I awoke before dawn. The sky all around was yet dark, and by the faint light of the binnacle Brattle yet sat and steered, his face haggard with want of sleep. He had not spied me. As for the boat, either the wind had shifted a little, or by so much he had altered her course. She was running now with a wide sheet—and it seemed to me that I could hear the noise of breaking water, not very far ahead.

It was this that roused me to my next move. If I could manage to dodge forward, to the bowthwart, the sail, as it now set, would blanket me from sight, and I might get a glimpse—at all events, as soon as dawn lifted—of any danger upon which we might be running. While I considered this, Brattle

gave me my opportunity, by drawing out his chart for yet another look at it; and while he conned it, bending over the lamp, I slipped under the boom and crouched myself, well hidden, upon the small decking in the bows.

The sound ahead was undoubtedly that of surf—though at what distance I could not guess. Moreover, it seemed to me, by the lift of the boat, that the sea under her had already begun to feel the shallowing bottom. Yet Brattle held her to her course. . . . On a sudden I bethought me of half-a-dozen trifles which—though he had never confessed, and I had never till now suspected it—arranged themselves as suddenly to convince me that he was something hard of hearing. Had I guessed it any time during the night I might have saved myself some caution. But here was a fix! Should I call out and warn him?

I was peering forward, making up my mind, when half a dozen things happened, and all of a heap. The sky lightened and day came upon us almost at a leap; a white line of breakers heaved into sight, not half a mile ahead; and with the roar of them a lift of the sea under us sent the boat yawing so violently that, but for throwing an arm quickly

about the mast, I had been shot overboard. I do not think that I actually let out a cry: I verily believe that Brattle, aroused by the surf and staring forward, received on that instant the shock of his life as my hand came around the mast and clutched it full in the light of dawn. I shall never know. But whatever it was that startled him, on the next lifting wave the sail gybed across with a plunge that sent us gunwale-under, shipping water by the gallon, and as the boat righted, there stood I, full in face of him, clutching the mast.

"Right she is, Mr. Brattle!" I shouted. "In sheet, and she 'll work off safe enough."

I can see his face now, with its dropped jaw, as he leaned forward, staring at me as though I had tumbled out of the sky, yet obeying me without a word, even to the pinning of the sheet; so that the long-boat picked up way and nosing up close to the wind, edged gradually clear of danger.

This danger—as I made out in the fast-gathering daylight—consisted in a chain of naked sandy islets or keys extending between us and a shore where the breakers spent themselves on a steep-too beach, close beneath a reddish-coloured bluff. On either side of the bluff green woods descended, almost overhanging

the water ; and it appeared to me, on a hasty glance, that the boat could be taken ashore on the west side of the bluff with little risk if only we could work her around this chain of keys and shoals, about which the surf heaved itself in breakers that would have beaten us to matchwood.

I pointed, and Brattle, still staring at me, shaped his course accordingly. It was impossible to be heard the length of the boat for the roar. But the man took my signs and steered her very cleverly. In the intervals between the boom of the surf I caught now and again the high screech of Brattle's parrot. The jolting had shaken its cover loose, and it had started piping at the top of its voice—" I 've seen better days ! I 've seen better days ! "

In half-an-hour we were clear of shoal-water, and Brattle, still obeying my signals, ran in for the beach. As the water grew easier I stepped aft and began with a careless, business-like air, to redd up the boat, that was all awash with the water she had taken in as she gybed. His first words were—

" The powder 's ruined ! "

This was true enough. Two bags of it—his only store—lay at the bottom of the boat with the water surging to and fro over them, useless as Christmas

puddings. Close upon this he said—and his teeth chattered as he said it—

"I didn't know you was here, young Holdfast: but I know now who your are, and the d——d idiot I was it never came home to me afore. You 're the shop-lad as mended the cage for me. You needn't deny it."

"I 'm not denying it," said I, cool as possible. "You might have known it any time, if you 'd taken the trouble to ask."

He seemed to ponder this for a moment. "The d——d fool, I 've been!" he muttered again, eyeing me.

"The shop was very dark, if you remember, Mr. Brattle," said I. "There 's no call to blame yourself."

"Well I do, then," he answered, and then "What 's your business here, anyhow?" he broke out with a heavy rage in his voice.

"Well," said I, "it started with Captain Bunce's setting me to bale her out. But *you 're* skipper now, or it looks like it: and I reckon my business lies nearabouts yours. What 's yours?"

"Been spyin' upon me all this while, you have," he growled, as the noise of the surf lessened and

allowed me to hear better. He regarded me sulkily with his one eye. "Been spyin' and watchin' upon me like the young land-shark you are. What d 'ye look to get by it ? "

"Never you mind that, Mr. Brattle," I said cheerfully. "You have played a trick upon Captain Bunce, and this virtuous line don't very well become you. However I came here, here we are in the same boat and the next job is to get ashore. After that you can talk away and welcome," I added, feeling pretty easy with him now that the water had spoilt his powder, and all through his own fault.

He said no more upon this, though he continued to eye me spitefully, which set me whistling to show that I made no concern of him. So we drew to the beach, which was steep-too and gravelly by the water-side, but ran back, above high-water mark, in a gentle slope of sand to the base of the woods. Running the boat in, we grounded her and got ashore without difficulty. Brattle lifted out his belongings—the parrot cage among them—and carried the lot some way up the bank. Returning, he conned the tide and the lie of the boat.

"We 're pretty well at lowest neaps, I reckon," said he; "and that means the tide won't make

half-an-hour longer. No call to strain ourselves, haulin' her up: wait and see how she sits in ten minutes' time. Here, bend the painter on to her kedge and carry it some way up the beach to make sure."

This I did, still whistling, and walked up the beach with my back to him, kedge in hand, the painter trailing after me. I had almost reached the rope's length when a bullet sang past my ear, and I saw it spit into the sand-bank ahead as the bang of the shot overtook and half stunned me.

CHAPTER X

THE PARLEY

I SPUN round in a passion. Like a fool, I had forgotten that, although his spare powder was wet, Brattle had kept his two guns in the stern-sheets out of harm's way. He wore a powder-horn, too, on a sling at his waist, and as I turned he was picking up his second gun, albeit with a very white face.

But he in his turn had forgotten something—the parrot-cage, which he had set down on the sand not five yards from the spot where I stood at this moment. I sprang for it pretty nimbly, in spite of my hurt foot, caught it up and, holding it in front of my body, dared him to shoot again.

"A pretty sportsman you are too, Mr. Brattle! And your feelings too fine to allow ye to shoot your game sitting. Now look here," said I, "lay down that gun, or I open the cage here and let the bird loose. I 'll give you ten seconds to decide."

He hesitated. The man indeed was quaking, and

I believe he had no stomach for this game of wilful murder. At length he laid down the gun slowly.

"Now hand me the cage," he said. "We 'll call quits on it."

"Indeed we will not," said I; "or not till you 've laid down your powder-flask too and stepped a dozen paces back. Then we 'll make exchange if you will."

He parleyed some while. But I could see that he valued the parrot above everything, and I held him to it. Our terms being agreed on, I handed over the cage, took the gun with the ammunition, and walked away up the beach with them at a careless pace. He called after me to know where I was going.

"To explore," said I. "Maybe to shoot something for breakfast. But seeing we 're both pretty sharp-set, you 'd best get out what food you have, for happen my marksmanship is no better than your own."

In truth, I had never let off a gun in my life, though I had mended many. But I was cock-a-whoop just then at having beaten him over the first trick, and resolved to carry matters with a high hand. I had indeed no intent to go fowling; and finding the wood above the beach far denser than I had expected, with a tangle of scrub and undergrowth, I pushed forward

into it but a little way (though quite far enough for my hurt foot), and then doubled back to a place whence I could watch the beach through a screen of brushwood.

But I had underrated Brattle's cunning. He had followed these motions of mine, belike by the crackling they made in the thicket, and by-and-by came up the beach to a spot within thirty yards of my hiding, that overhung it by a few feet only.

"You, Holdfast!" he hailed. "I can't see you, but I know whereabouts you are, and precious well you can hear me."

As I thought fit to make no answer, he went on—

"See here, my lad. It 's foolishness for us two to start quarrelling, this fashion. Put it that I took ye at unawares, just now. You 've been doin' the same to me, and for months. So let 's call quits again and wipe the slate. I bear ye no malice, so help me! I 've been thinkin' it over. We too are in the same boat: those was your very words, and you never spoke truer. Come down and sign articles, lad, and I 'll make your fortune—your fortune, d 'ye hear?"

He waited on this, but I kept silence, obstinate as before. It did me good to hear him suing me thus;

for if I have a fault 'tis that I do not easily get over an injury, and my blood was hot yet over his attempt to murder me. I was a fool, in a way. Anyhow, it never came into my recokoning that he would do what he did next.

"You 've heard me, I know," he called up again. "Very well, my cockerel; it don't beseem me to stand here, at close range, exposin' myself to make terms with a boy. The island 's roomy enough for me and you anyhow; and I 've given ye your chance."

He stuck his hands in his pockets and walked away out of range. I saw him bend over his bundles, and made sure he would unpack them and set about preparing breakfast. Instead, he lifted and carried them back to the boat. Even when he hoisted the cage on board I was slow in guessing his purpose.

The stern of the boat floated. With a heave he thrust her off; clambered in over the bows; shipped paddles, pulled for an offing, and started to hoist sail.

I was marooned.

CHAPTER XI

MAROONED

It was too late now to climb down and sue him to take me in. Sore as my foot was, and empty my stomach, I had a thought that by following the line of shore I might at least keep him in view. But I had not reckoned with the brushwood, which I soon found to be impassable; nor with a ridge of rock which closed the beach to the westward; in which direction he headed, skirting the coast. Nick Brattle was gone, and the parrot with him. However his voyage might end, he had assuredly played me tit for tat.

For conceive my situation. I had no clothes, save a shirt, breeches and belt; no shoes, no cap; and no belongings save a knife, a gun which I scarcely knew how to charge, and the smallest store of ammunition. I was alone, on an island which (for aught I knew) lay clean out of the track of navigation, and was either uninhabited or, if inhabited, by none

but Spaniards, the enemies of all English, or savages, enemies of all the human race.

On the other hand, to persuade me to cheerfuller hopes, I had already observed not a few sea-birds along the shore, whose tameness, while it argued that few men ever came hither, promised to help my inexpertness with the gun ; and even along the fringe of the woodland grew numberless wild vines, their fruit impoverished by the rankness of their growth, but sweet and refreshing nevertheless. Also I noted many tall straight palms, their tops bearing coco-nuts, doubtless to be reached by climbing, when my foot should better.

For the present, having watched the long-boat out of sight past the point, I satisfied my appetite as best I could, pulling and eating many clusters of wild grapes, and drinking of a clear spring that gushed at the head of the beach. Then, taking my gun, I roamed the shore for a shot at the sea-birds, and at length, by firing full into a flock of boobies, succeeded in killing one. But I had better have saved my powder ; for as I picked up the bird the thought came into my head that it was of no use to me. I had neither fire to cook it, nor the means of lighting a fire.

This fairly gravelled me, and was clearly of so much

importance (if fate should decree me to pass many days on this spot) that, collecting the driest sticks I could find, I spent a great part of that day in rubbing them together, striving to produce fire by an Indian trick I had heard my father describe. But I could not arrive at the knack of it; and after wasting the whole afternoon, was forced to have recourse to the wild grapes again for my supper.

That night, not knowing what wild beasts might disturb me in the wood, I made my bed on the sand of the beach, being careful only to choose a spot well above high-water mark. But here I must mention a plague that disturbed my sleep, and tormented all the days I spent on the island: I mean the swarms of black flies that infested the woods, and, though scantier by the water's edge, even there made life intolerable. They appeared to know nothing of sleep, and I never found the patience to ignore them: for if allowed to settle on the skin for more than a moment, they drew blood.

I awoke next morning—if the word may be used where sleep had been so inconsiderable—and at first thought of reloading my gun for another shot at the sea-birds. But the one bird I had brought down was still to cook, and I could as yet put

away with a shiver the thought of feeding on raw flesh.

My ankle had swollen to a great size, which made walking extremely painful. I resolved, therefore, to explore the woods only so far as my immediate hunger compelled me, and was lucky enough in my ramble to discover, besides the wild grapes, a quantity of small greenish figs and another fruit which I did not recognise, and therefore let be, for fear of poison. It was of a brown colour with a touch of gold, in shape much like an orange, but larger. To tell the truth, I should very likely have tasted it, had I not, in reaching up to pluck one, almost trodden on a snake which lay at length (not coiled) on the ground beneath the bush, in appearance for all the world like a dead branch. It made off, hissing, and I dare say in a terror equal with my own, which was strong enough to dissuade me from exploring the woods farther that day. I had seen enough of them to suspect that, dense and full of thorns as they were, they formed an impassable barrier for one half-naked and shoeless; and that, unless I could reach it in some way by water, the main part of the island was closed to me.

I had cut a stout stick to defend me hence-forward against snakes, and to help my lame foot in walking : and towards evening, as I paced my strip of beach, this brought me another stroke of luck. For, my weight pressing it some inches deep in the sand at each step, by and by the point came up with some evil-looking mess adhering to it ; whereupon scooping the sand away with my hands, I disclosed at least a hundred turtle eggs, laid there to hatch and not yet spoilt for eating. I was now secure against starvation for some time to come : but found the eggs none too palatable, and wished again for a fire. It is strange that I took so long in hitting on the way to make one, when I had the easy means all the while in my hand.

The discovery in the end came from another, which at first put me in a great fright. I was startled one afternoon—the fourth, I think—by a crackling noise at the edge of the wood behind me, and looked up to perceive a large hog that had broken covert and stood snuffing the breeze from the sea. At sight of me he faced about with a snort and was at once lost in the thickets. This, I say, first put me in a fright : for he might be a dangerous beast, and one of many, and at any time I might be attacked as

I slept. Next it set me wondering if the brute was perchance one of a drove owned and kept by people living somewhere beyond the woods. Lastly it set me thinking again of my gun, to defend myself, and of my great need of a fire, to keep off wild animals at night: and so I bethought me (and with shame to have taken so long about it) of the flint in my gun-lock and the dry powder in my flask. With these and some dry moss from the trees I had my fire soon started, and spent a great part of my time hence-forward in collecting wood to feed it and keep it going night and day.

I was the more thankful for my fire when, two days later, I surprised a whole drove of wild hogs routing on the edge of the wood. One of them made at me, and, my gun missing fire—for I was unhandy at loading it—I had much ado to swing myself up to a bough and out of reach of his tusks. Having missed me, he paid me no further attention, but went on routing, and from my place of refuge I noted that he and his fellows fed with enjoyment on the strange fruit before described, which lay in plenty on the ground beneath the trees. In about half an hour the unwelcome brutes moved away into the forest and left me free to clamber down; whereupon,

reasoning that what they did not reject I might safely taste, I plucked some of the fruit and found it both healthful and delicious.

These boars were at worst a passing danger: the myriads of black flies tormented me without ceasing, and allowed neither rest nor sleep, for night put no period to their activities. It seemed to me that they bred in the woods, and that if I could manage to swim out to the nearest of the sandy islets, which ran in a chain to the northward of my beach, I might at any rate enjoy a short spell of deliverance: for no vegetation grew on them. One day, therefore—having first taken care to heap up a huge fire against my return—I stripped and made essay, taking a stout pole of bamboo with me to support my arms when I tired, for I was an indifferent swimmer.

The nearest islet lay some five hundred yards from shore, and was not troubled by any such heavy surf as played without ceasing around the outer ones. Approach to it seemed practicable and was, indeed, easy. I came to land, not much exhausted, and found my sandy refuge (at high water some four hundred feet in circuit) quite free of flies and cooled, moreover, by a perpetual breeze which more than atoned for its lack of shade. To be short, I made it

a practice to swim out and pass the hottest hours of the day here, and even (as my expertness grew) ventured to cross the narrow channels and visit the two islets next adjacent, but went no farther in fear of the surf. The channels, though not bare even at lowest tides, were shallow, and at times a strong current swept through them, so that my voyage now and then gave me excitement enough. I had laid no account with sharks ; nor met with a shark but once when, just as my feet touched bottom on landing, a shovel-nosed brute made a dart and struck me low in the thigh. I suppose that in the shallow water he grounded and could not reach me with open teeth. I felt the blow for some days after, and the adventure deterred me for a week from swimming. But in the end the torment of the flies got the better of my terrors, and as a fact I was never troubled again.

CHAPTER XII

THE MISSIONARY

THUS, and on the whole not unpleasantly, I spent no less than five months on the island. My health all the while was excellent, and each day brought its occupation, so that I wasted little time in speculating on what had become of Brattle; while, as for my deliverance, I left it to Heaven. Always, as night fell, I returned to my beach and slept by my fire, which was far more likely to be spied in passing by a Spaniard than by any friendly ship. I had thought of this, to be sure: but the fire was my hearth, as the hut which I had built (of bamboo and palmetto leaves) beside it was my home, and I could as little have done without one as without the other.

At the end of this time I fell sick, and the torpor of spirit which had lain on me now took another turn. Being unable any longer to swim out to my beloved islet, I was forced to lie the day long and endure the flies: and these persuaded me to look

forward to deliverance by death, which—if my weakness should increase and no longer permit me to range for food—could not be long in coming. During these days of lassitude I lost account of time, and cannot tell what day it was, nor of what month (but I made it out to have been April) that, looking out to sea one afternoon, I descried a small boat approaching.

For a minute or two I supposed it to be Brattle returning with the long-boat. But this was a sick man's speculation: for the boat approached from the northward, even as we had done, and was soon discernible as a canoe. One man sat in it. I cared not who he might be. I had neither friend to expect nor enemy (in my state) to fear; so I kept my seat on the beach.

As he approached, however, I took stock of him. He was an elderly man, exceedingly tall, with a long grey beard, and in aspect grave as a judge. I knew not to what degree it surprised him, but he had already descried me on the shore, and lowering his small sail at some little distance beyond the breakers, he hailed me in English, but with a strong North British accent, desiring to know if he might safely come to land. Upon this I stood up and called back

that, as for the breakers, he might put ashore and fear nothing; while, as for other dangers, I was the only living soul hereabouts, and too near death to intend harm to anyone.

He showed no astonishment at this; but, having made a landing, pulled up his canoe a little way and advanced to me, holding out his hand with great heartiness of manner.

"I am overjoyed then, Mr. Brattle," said he, "to have made your acquaintance in time, and trust under Providence to be the means of restoring you to health, both physical"—or as he pronounced it, "pheesical"—"and spiritual."

I thanked him, but had to tell him that he laboured under a mistake; that I had indeed come to the island in Brattle's company, but that he had long ago left me and sailed away, I knew not whither.

"That is extremely disconcerting," said the stranger gravely: "for there was a distinct understanding that I should find him at Mortallone, and, as I understood, in the neighbourhood of the Keys."

"Mortallone?" said I. "The Keys? You must excuse me, sir, but until now I have not known the name of this place."

He eyed me for a moment — as I thought

suspiciously: but my sickness, at any rate, was apparent enough and genuine. "I know of no other Keys than those yonder," said he—with a wave of the hand towards the islets where I had spent so many an empty day—"save those at the mouth of Hornygold's Creek, as they call it. And Mr. Brattle cannot have left Mortallone. It was vital to our contract that he should remain." Here he paused for a few moments, seemingly lost in thought. "Come," he resumed, "you have not been left here, at any rate, without instructions?"

But my sickness made me weary of being catechised.

"I have no instructions, sir," I answered him. "Mr. Brattle and I parted no very good friends. He sailed away, coasting southward, and I have not seen him since."

"H'm, a quarrel?" he suggested. "It is not unusual on expeditions of this nature. But," said he, with a suspicious glance, "on his part it cannot have been a wholly successful one, since I perceive you possess a gun."

"Oh, sir," said I, "be sure I have not killed him. He left me, I say."

"With his parrot?"

"Yes."

"Then doubtless," said this knowledgeable man, "he would be bound for Hornygold's Creek, where the pinnace was to anchor; and the Keys there are those he had in view. I had not gathered so from my brother. Usually, when one speaks of the Keys of Mortallone, those to the northward as indicated; and so it has always been understood by the many who (to my knowledge) have dug them over, seeking that which moth and dust doth corrupt. It would be curious if this perishable wealth lay in the other Keys after all; and"—he added, musing—"it would account for Mr. Brattle's certainty, on a chase in which so many have failed. After all, there 's reason in it—that it should lie close by the spot where Hornygold is known to have encamped."

All this, you may be sure, was Greek to me. But weakness had reduced me beyond taking concern in treasure or in talk of treasure: and I listened inattentively, my head throbbing, while he ran out his tongue-talk questions. He told me that his name was McAlister—Duncan McAlister—and that he ventured his life as a missionary, spreading the Protestant faith among the Indians, and combating the Romish errors of the Spaniards. These enemies

of the pure faith had threatened to burn him; and he had fled to this island of Mortallone partly as to a sanctuary, to support life here with the aid of his gun, and partly to get news of his elder brother Alastair McAlister, a Jamaican skipper, who (he told me) had entered into compact with Brattle at Port Royal to fit out a pinnace, raise a trustworthy crew, and sail hither to Mortallone on a promised division of treasure which Brattle felt confident of finding.

"My brother will not be due here for a fortnight and more," he said. "The plan, as he imparted it to me in Port Royal—where I embraced him—presupposed his finding Mr. Brattle here on the northern point of the island, and taking him off by boat: Hornygold's Creek being mentioned only as a second string to the bow, so to speak, in the event of ill-success."

I now know that my visitor dared to be thus open with me concerning the treasure because he verily believed that I had but a short while to live. For the same reason he remained with me for three days, hospitably nursing me, and in the intervals of my delirium—for my sickness on the second day declared itself as a high fever—soliciting me to make my peace

with heaven, and embrace the great truth of Justification by Faith.

I do not know when he gave me over, as he did in the end. Nor did I see him sail away and leave me to my fate. But he salved his conscience by leaving also a small store of provisions with some dried fruit, and (best of all) a large calabash full of diluted chincona-bark ready to my hand. And this last, when I awoke out of a long slumber of weakness, was under Providence the means of saving my life.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FOREST FIRE

My recovery was tedious; and again I must have died but for the small stock of provisions Mr. McAlister had left beside me. But for these I had doubted that he and his visit had been a part of my delirium; and indeed, even with this evidence beside me, it was hard to believe that any Christian man—let alone a missionary—could have abandoned a fellow-creature in such extremity.

But here was proof: and for further evidence my memory retained almost every word of his conversation. Particularly I remembered his telling me that my islets passed for the true Keys of Mortallone, and that many had dug them over in search of treasure—Hornygold's treasure, doubtless. From my beach (for I was as yet too weak to swim out to the nearest) I studied these Keys with a new interest. They were eight in all, running in two

series, three and four, with one islet (the smallest) set in a wide interval between, thus—

Beach | O O O | O | O O O O

Actually, of course, the Keys were irregular in shape and size, and the line of them ran in a slight zigzag ; but I am no draughtsman, and the above indicates their position sufficiently well for my purpose. You must bear in mind that they bore almost due northward.

Now as I have said, a strong surf played incessantly around the four outer islets, with a race so fierce that at mid-tide its roaring could be heard above the roar of the breakers. *Watch for the fourth : under water most times.* If the parrot's sentence, as translated by Rumbo, referred to these Keys, the treasure had lain once in the fourth, and in a spot covered by the tide at all but low water. I say 'had lain once' : for not one of the sandy circles measured more than five hundred yards in circumference, and a determined body of diggers could explore every inch of them all in the inside of a week. They had (if my missionary could be trusted) been so explored by many ; and I made little doubt that the treasure, if ever concealed yonder, had been found

and removed long ago. Still my weak fancy played with the puzzle. Which was the fourth? Did one count from seaward or from the shore? If from seaward, the fourth would be the innermost of the outer series: and to this one I had never thought of swimming even in my hale days, for I feared the tide-race; while to land on it with a boat, had I possessed one, would be dangerous by reason of the surf. I inclined rather to count from the shore, and then No. 4 became the small isolated Key between the two series. I had swum out to this once or twice, for the tide ran more slackly inshore; but even so I had only ventured in the lull at high water or low ebb, and just now I was in no condition to attempt it. Moreover, this Key was the smallest of all, and probably, therefore, had been the most thoroughly ransacked. I should add here that I played with these questions rather to keep my mind employed than in any real lust to discover riches I could neither use nor take away if I found them—to such a low state of body and brain had the fever reduced me.

Of vastly more importance was it to rekindle my fire, which had died out; and, as soon as strength allowed, to shoot some game to roast by it. My

own stock of powder was long since exhausted: but the missionary had left me a small pouchful. On the fourth day of my convalescence, wearying of my diet of dried fruits, I started again to try my luck in the woods; and there, halting on the edge to draw breath after my climb up the low cliff, I committed the maddest act of folly.

I can remember the scene now as I looked back and took stock of it. The time was late afternoon, and the air somewhat chilly—this had first set me thinking about a fire. A steady breeze had reached Mortallone, blowing from the mainland (as it usually did, in such weather, at this hour of the day); and an eddy tide, a backwash of the outer race, ran against it, raising white caps in the channels between the nearer islets. Farther out the tide ran with the wind, thrumming like a church organ; in colour a deep blue, save where it made breakers upon the outer Keys. The sun, westering in a fine haze, gilded these breakers, edge upon edge, and cast splashes of a greener gold about me through the thin screen of boughs overhanging me. I remember it all: but I remember best these splashes of light, because through my own action I was never to see them again.

I had piled some sticks on the beach, ready for my fire, but I wanted touchwood.

From a tree, close on my left, there depended a thick string—a cord, almost a curtain—of dry moss which seemed most suitable to my purpose. Instead of plucking a handful, I was minded to test it where it hung : and I cannot call in any weakness or dizziness of brain to excuse me. My eyes were open, and saw clearly. With deliberation I loosened the flint from my gun, and struck a spark into the tinder.

The flame ran up the trunk as though my dried moss had been a train of powder ; and in ten seconds the tree-top was roaring with a sheet of fire. Two seconds later I had taken to my heels, and was running down the cliff for dear life, the heat scorching the back of my neck, as the blaze leapt from tree to tree faster than the breeze could fan it.

I ran from it almost to the water's edge. When I turned there for a look back at my amazing handiwork I could hear the squeals of the hogs and other woodland beasts as they caught alarm and stampeded. The fire raced—there is no other word. For an hour and more I stood there, sick of my folly, reminded of it at intervals by the distant outcries of wild creatures overtaken and perishing.

But the roaring fire left another and slower one behind it. The one leaped forward after fresh prey; the other stayed and set itself to attack the heart of stout trees, eating into them until the whole of the near forest south and east was a naked oven, with its core exposed to the wind. The heat of it grew intolerably, and forced me little by little to the sea, to stand knee-deep in it, and at length to seek relief every minute or so by dipping myself head and shoulders and letting the cool water run over my skin.

It was now close upon sunset, and with every moment the spectacle increased in grandeur. To my right—that is, to the westward—the flames had run along the tree-tops against the wind almost as swiftly as they had run with it to leeward, south and east. But this blaze had not lasted. It had swaled the leaves and upper twigs until it reached the waterside, and finding no more of these to destroy, had roared itself to a sudden stop. The more serious fire had followed it but a few feet to windward of the spot where I had touched off my spark. It crept yet, foot by foot; but a screen of wood half a mile thick, scorched and blackened, stood as a fence between the breeze and the main

conflagration. Above this screen or fence, and some way southward of the sunset, swung the new moon.

I had turned my face towards the moon, less in curiosity than to avert it from the heat, when over this screen of blackened trees a bird came flying clumsily from the southward. I watched it, wondering what bird it might be and what instinct impelled it to wing northward thus, when every living creature—myself excepted—had escaped, or tried to escape, down the wind: and my wonder grew as I perceived that it winged its way toilsomely, as if wounded, or at any rate ill-ballasted.

It drew nearer, fetching a clumsy circuit, and I recognised it for a parrot; nearer still, and I caught my breath as either the glare deceived me or the wings were grey, and threw up a glint of scarlet against the blaze. I had started many parrots in the woods, but they had invariably been green parrots, and in this, as it now circled close, I could not detect any hue of green. Could it, by any wild chance, be Brattle's?

I had scarcely put the question to myself when the bird, apparently misliking the heat by the shore, headed away from me seaward and alit upon the nearest Key.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FOURTH KEY

As it fluttered down, the light of fire shone full on the bird. It was a grey parrot—Brattle's—I could have wagered my life on it.

Two things persuaded me to give chase, mad as the adventure was for a man not wholly recovered of a high fever: the first, that the heat had already driven me out knee-deep in water, and a swim would at least be preferable to standing and taking a chill below the knees while the rest of my body slowly roasted; the next, that the spring tide was now ebbing fast towards low water, and I had observed that for the last day or two it had been drawing out to an extraordinary distance, so that I could count on the channel between me and the islet being scarce more than half its usual width. Still I dared not attempt it until I had waded ashore, braving the heat, and provided myself with the bamboo rod, with the support of which I had made my first essays in swimming. I had discarded it months ago for that

purpose, and shortened and trimmed it at one end to the shape of a scoop for digging out turtle-eggs. But it would serve for a buoy as well as ever, and making a dash for it where it lay on the beach, plain to see in the glare, I dragged it down to the water, thrust out and, keeping it beneath my right arm-pit, began to swim.

The tide ran easily on the low ebb and, my excitement helping me, I got across without much trouble. As my foot found bottom I had leisure to scan the round hummock of the islet lit by the blaze against the now pitch-dark night, and to mark the bird as it hopped and fluttered about the sand. It was Brattle's parrot beyond a doubt, though it appeared to have lost a quantity of tail-feathers: and as if to welcome me with that assurance, it called out, catching sight of me—

"Mortallone! Mortallone! I've seen better days!"

For a moment, as I waded ashore, it seemed minded to come to me: but thought better of it and fluttered away, dodging me across the sand. Then while I followed, shouldering my bamboo with one arm while I held out the other coaxingly, as though to entice it with a lump of sugar, it piped out again—

"Mortallone! Mortallone!"

—and lifting itself on wing clumsily as a hen, flew away from me to the next islet. My short swim had left me with a healthy glow. My blood was up now, and I swam the next channel, making light of it; and the next, though assured that, if the bird dodged me farther, I was done—for to the fourth islet I should never have strength to swim Judge of my amazement when, following still to the brink of a channel which (as all experience told me) must measure at least a thousand yards across, I found that the distance had shrunk to thirty yards at most!

I stared: but there, in the light of the blazing forest, lay the Key, right before me. It had ever been the smallest, this midmost Key: but now it appeared to be smaller than usual: which again was strange, with the tides running so low. . . . On a sudden I understood.

Watch for the fourth. Under water most times.

This was not the Key which I had seen yesterday and counted for the fourth, but a new one; a Key only left bare by the very lowest tides. There was no magic about it. Its sands shone close ahead of me—so close that I could even discern the bands of

scarlet on the bird's wing as he fluttered about piping his cry.

I waded out, intending to swim as soon as the water reached above my chest. But there was no need. The bottom shelved down until I was almost arm-pit deep : then it as gradually rose, and I waded ashore.

The Key measured a bare forty yards across, its slightly rounded apex standing but three or four feet above the waters which would soon return and engulf it. Therefore (I reasoned) if treasure had ever been hidden here, the man who covered it out of sight would have chosen the very centre of the mound, to give himself the full of his scant time. I raced forward, and choosing this same centre as accurately as I could judge, began to scoop like a madman, using my bamboo for a shovel ; while the parrot, silent now and seeking to draw me no farther, hopped around confidingly, his eyes shining like beads as he cocked his head aside against the light that still blazed over the island.

The young moon was sinking : but we had light and to spare without any of her help. Even at this distance I could feel, as I toiled, the warmth beating off the shore. And I sweated—for thirty minutes

vainly. Then the point of my bamboo struck against something hard, and I uncovered the edge of a box.

I groped, rubbing my fingers along the sharp edge. The box was of iron, not greatly rusted—until they jammed themselves between it and a something else which I set myself to uncover. At first I supposed it to be a log of wood: then, feeling it, I guessed it to be leather: and so, clearing away the sand, dragged up a heavy boot. As I did so, two or three small pellets dropped out of it, as dice from a dice-box. I stooped, and picking up one of them, held it high in the light. It was a small bone, one of a human foot.

"I've seen better days!—I've seen better days!" squawked the parrot, that had drawn near and kept hopping about, just beyond reach of my bamboo spade. I worked away from the iron box now, following the dead man from his boots up, and piece by piece uncovering him—first a pair of leathern breeches, excellently well preserved, next a lappet of rutted scarlet cloth, until I had bared the whole skeleton. His coat had fallen away from his ribs, and by an awkward hasty stroke I knocked the skull sideways before I scooped it free of the sand.

There he lay, however, complete as he had been stretched out and covered, God knows by what hands: and his right arm, crossed over his breast, ended in a rusty hook.

While I stared down into the hollow sockets of the skull a small wave broke and sent a trickle over the edge of the trench. The tide was making again, and I had no time to search farther. I watched it as it lapped down the sands I had dug and smoothed them back over the corpse. Then, as the water rose and began to swirl about my ankles, I waded back and swam for the next Key shoreward. I knew that the highest tides left it uncovered. I gained it and, running forward a few strides, sank prone on the sand and so tumbled into sleep. The island still blazed, but I was dog weary, too far tired even to remember the parrot, or if it was following me.

But in my sleep I must have rolled over on my back or the sun awoke me shining straight upon my eyelids; and, sitting up and staring, I saw in the offing a sail.

CHAPTER XV

SALVING

THE sail was that of a small pinnace, and as she bore down upon the island I perceived that her crew consisted of two men only. They had descried me upon the sandy Key, for they had good glasses; and running in as near as they thought safe, they got out a boat. One of the pair jumped into it and rowed straight towards me.

He approached, and I made sure from his shape and height that it was my friend the missionary returning; though it astonished me not a little that he should come thus from the northward, for I had supposed all along that he had left me to cruise down the coast in search of Brattle. The new-comer for his part, as he stood up and took stock of me, the while he pushed his boat shoreward, appeared no less amazed.

"Hullo!" he hailed. "Who are you, and what is your business here?"

"My name is Holdfast," I called back; "and I do a pretty good business, if you will come ashore and see. You are Mr. Alistair McAlister, I think," added I: for since his voice told me he was not the missionary he could only be the missionary's brother.

"Aye," he answered after a pause, "that is my name: but I don't carry it written on me, do I?"

"I had it from your brother," I told him. "And your brother, I believe, is down the coast searching for Nick Brattle."

He took some time to digest this.

"But I canna see how you come into this job," he persisted.

"It would take a long time to explain," said I; "and I am not sure about anything just now. But go back to your pinnace and drop anchor, she 'll ride here safely enough. And bring your man along, with a spade—that is, if you can trust him."

"He has been my mate and book-keeper these five-and-twenty years," said Mr. McAlister. "He would not be here if I did not trust him."

I waved to him to pull back and cast anchor as I directed: which he did, and by-and-by returned with his mate, a couple of shovels, a pick, and a crowbar. I liked the look of the mate: a grizzled,

heavy-shouldered Scotsman, by name Angus Bain, and in speech the most taciturn man I have ever met.

"Now," said Mr. McAlister as they landed and got the tools ashore, "what are we to do? And what is the bargain?"

"What you have to do first," said I, "is to wait until the tide goes down another half-fathom or so. As for the bargain"—I stuck here for a moment, until a thought came to me—"I understood that you and Mr. Brattle had fixed the bargain up at Port Royal. Well then, sir, I stand in for Brattle's share."

He nodded. "I will put that in writing," said he; and squatting on the sand, he drew out a leathern case from under his sea-jumper, extracted a slip of paper, found the stump of lead-pencil in his breeches pocket, and wrote out my claim "upon the estate of Bartholomew Hornygold deceased, to settle with Nicholas Brattle for the proportion or part of the proportion due to the said Nicholas Brattle, as per contract signed"—at such and such a date—"with Alistair McAlister, master mariner; and in no way to impinge upon the share of the said Alistair McAlister, namely two-fifths, to whatsoever sum this might amount when realised." This

document he desired me to sign in full, and I did so, wondering to feel a pencil again between my fingers.

"You may leave me, sir, to get square with Mr. Brattle," said I.

"I will," said he gravely. "You are sure of the stuff?"

"Reasonably," I answered. "I am sure enough at any rate of Captain Hornygold"—and I pointed to the spot where now, as the tide drained ocean-ward my sunk Key began to show yellow beneath the swirl of the water.

We pushed the boat across to it, and presently it took ground. To me, after these many months on an island where money could purchase nothing, it was strange to see these two solemn-sober men plunge over calf-deep in their eagerness to be digging. They had their spade at work before the water left the apex of the mound: and I, a boy, sat in the boat and watched them.

The tide had washed in both sides of my trench and smoothed the sand over the dead pirate as though I had never broken in upon his rest. But in less than ten minutes they had him uncovered again.

"Eh?" said Mr. McAlister, and tossed a spadeful playfully at the parrot, which had been fluttering

idly about the Keys, but now drew near and watched us at a little distance, its head cocked on one side. "Man heapeth up riches and knoweth not who shall gather them. At his feet was it, ye found the box?"

Four chests they discovered, all of iron. The first, after much prising at the lid, they broke open with a pick. There, sure enough as they flung its lid back, lay the treasure—all in doubloons, and pieces-of-eight, heaped to the brim. Mr. McAlister grunted and looked up at me while his brows dripped with sweat. "The tale 's true then," he said. "Bat Hornygold hoarded nothing but solid money. That was a principle with him, and we 'll find no jewels or gew-gaws here."

In this he proved to be right. But we had no time to open the other chests: for before the fourth had been disinterred the tide had started to make again, and it was with much ado that we haled our treasure to the boat and ferried it over—one chest at a time—to the islet where it would be safe out of reach of the waters. Even as we dragged the fourth box to the boat the waves began to lap about our feet and trickle over the trench, smoothing down Captain Bat Hornygold in his grave once more.

Then as we clambered in to push across with our

last load I pointed and let out a cry. For what should I see, just beyond the point to the south-west, but the *Royal Anna's* long-boat under sail, with a canoe in tow!

"The deevil!" swore Mr. McAlister. "If yon 's Brattle, he can get to the pinnace before us, and we 're done."

"I 'd liefer think it 's your brother, sir," said I. "It 's his canoe, at all events."

—And so it proved. The missionary, when we hailed him, brought news of Nick Brattle. The man was dead, he assured us. "And what 's more, his bird is flown."

We told him that he need take no concern about the bird, and pointed to it: for it kept about us, though always at a safe distance.

"I 've brought his cage, anyway," said the missionary, and held it up to show to us. "I found it with the door open, even as ye see." He set the cage down in the stern-sheets again, and made his landing. "But what have we here?" he cried.

We showed him our booty, and pressed him into the work of getting the chests on board. The pinnace's boat would carry one only, being a cockle of a craft and little stouter than a dinghy. The

long-boat would take two with ease. So we loaded the lighter one first, and sent Angus off to the pinnace in her, with instructions to return for the fourth chest. Then we turned to load the long-boat. In the bustle we had forgotten the parrot for a while: and here comes in the queerest miracle in all this true tale of mine. That extraordinary bird had actually made its way back to the boat and to its cage; and awaited us on its perch, sharpening its beak on the worn wood, regarding its empty pannikin and squawking, "Mortallone! Mortallone! I 've seen better days!"

My narrative began with the parrot, and may end with it. We pierced together the story of its flight four days later, when we visited Hornygold's Creek, and having anchored the pinnace there, went ashore with the missionary for guide (I should tell you that the spring-tides were 'cutting' as they say, and though the two brothers and Angus visited the Fourth Key at next ebb, they found it all but awash and had to desist from their digging without any further discovery. If Hornygold buried any treasure beyond that contained in our four chests, it reposes beside the old sinner still).

The missionary guided us ashore among the woods

of the creek. The forest fire had swept east of them, and they were fresh and verdant. A trail of rough grass led through them and brought us to a shed of tumble-down framework, overclimbed by a grapeless vine. Within lay a body—Brattle's—on a bed of grass with some boards underneath that raised it a few inches from the ground. Within reach stood a bottle containing a little water, and some mussel and limpet shells lay strewn about the floor. The missionary told us where he had found the empty cage, and pointed to something grey that the dead man's hand yet clutched. It was a bunch of feathers—the tail-feathers of a parrot. With that we understood. Brattle, dying of weakness and starvation, had opened the cage to wring the bird's neck : and in the scuffle bird and secret had taken flight together.

The two McAlisters were honest men, and upon reaching Jamaica faithfully paid me over my share of the treasure. It amounted to two thousand pounds and a little over. I took my passage home in the *Arbuthnot* pink, and arriving at Bristol on September 4th, 17—, was received by my parents as one restored from the grave. But when I asked news of Mistress Carberry—for the voyage through

I had looked forward to bringing her my prize and laying it at her feet—they told me that she was dead these three months, of a chill contracted whilst acting at Covent Garden : that she had come home to Bristol Hotwells in hope of recovery : but had fallen into a swift decline and died, in no very affluent circumstances. She was dust now—she that had been my goddess and the darling of thousands.

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AUNT TRINIDAD

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Aunt Trinidad

I

THE FLAGSTAFF TOWER

I MUST first tell how this narrative comes to be made public. Until her death, at a ripe age, in 173–, and for so long as I could remember, the late Mrs. Hannah Trudgian occupied a cottage in Bristol on Christmas Stairs, not far from Quay Street. It was the fourth cottage from the top on the left hand as you go up; and up to my fifteenth year—when there happened what I must presently record—I lived in it alone with her. I could remember no other home. I called her "aunt" or "Aunt Hannah"; among the neighbours, and all who spoke of her out of her hearing, she was "Aunt Trinidad."

I believe it was towards the close of the second week after being admitted to the Charity School—

where we wore upper garments of blue sea-cloth that reached to the ankles, with leathern waist-belts and pewter buttons larger than crown pieces—that I began to wonder why the other boys had fathers and mothers while I had neither, and asked my aunt about it. She was ready with the answer, and, indeed, said she had been expecting me for some time to put the question; but she met it with another.

"What is your name?" she asked, opening her Prayer Book at the Catechism, which she had taught me to repeat like a parrot.

"Seraphim Johns," said I, though she and everybody called me Seph.

"Who gave you that name?"

"My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism. But, Aunt Hannah, are they the same as real fathers and mothers?"

"'Tis they, Seph," she answered, "who are charged to bring you into a state of salvation; and I am your only god-parent now alive."

But, of course, this did not wholly satisfy me; so, after a glance, she bent her eyes again upon the Catechism and said, speaking very slowly, as if studying it, that I had been born at Bideford, in Devon; where my mother, her sister, and my

father, a shipwright by trade, had both been swept away, along with many a hundred of folk, by the plague, leaving me an infant; that she had travelled down from Bristol and rescued me, and that some day, at a proper time, she would tell me more, but it was all very painful to her.

I had the sense not to press for more. I had even the sense to feel that she was very near to breaking down. Now, my aunt was a hard-eyed woman; if she had broken down before me I cannot tell what would have happened. Belike I should have started to run out for help.

For she had never shown me any tenderness, that I could remember; and some two years later, when I came by the injury that crippled me for life, she took it—as I then thought, and the surgeon and our neighbours as well—with great inhumanity. Like most Bristol boys of my age, I was given to loitering about the quays and conning the vessels lading or discharging there, with a mind to become a sailor in time, and in my heart many foolish young devisings how that time might be shortened. One day as I was star-gazing thus, staring aloft at the foretopmast of a pink, the *Garland of London*—I have cause to remember her name, as will be seen—as I stared up

there at the spar, which was new, shipped and hoisted the day before, and all a-dazzle in the sun with a new fleet of blocks and fresh running rigging, it happened that I trod over the edge and tumbled maybe fourteen or fifteen feet between the wall of the quay and the vessel, my head striking against her side as I fell, so that I was too grievously stunned to swim,—which, indeed, I could have done very poorly. But the pink, as it befell—the tide just then swinging inward—at once saved my life and ruined it, pinching me so as to hold my body above water until help came, but breaking four of my ribs meanwhile and, what was worse, crushing my backbone out of the straight. I can recall the anguish of being carried home up Christmas Stairs, then very uneven and paved with cobbles laid edgewise. Near the top of them stood my aunt, who no sooner saw my plight than, drawing a little aback, she broke out a-scolding. Nay, from scolding she turned to reviling; and when they had carried me into the house the surgeon was forced to rebuke her and threaten to drive her from the room. For, without caring that I heard, she kept saying: "Better he was killed outright." "A young man crippled—what is he but a cumberer?" And, on top of this, some words

about "the sins of the fathers." I believe he was half-afraid of leaving me to her: but, in fact, after this outburst she tended me for many weeks with much devotion, though with no sign that she did it out of anything more than duty.

At length, however, I was so far recovered that she could leave me once a fortnight for a few hours and attend the evening Bible-class in Maryport Street, as she had done before my illness and so far back as I could remember. For weeks she had been the worse in temper for being deprived of this "sustenance," as she called it.

Now, it was about this time that, lying idly on my back, I began to piece certain things together. For years, at short intervals, my aunt had suffered from attacks of what she called "bilious fever." They seldom kept her to bed for more than a day, and she had given me to understand that they were incident to ladies of her age. Strange to tell, they ceased from the day I was borne home on a shutter until the day after she resumed these consolations of religion; and it seemed to me now, putting many scraps of memory together and fixing them by date, that somehow the Bible-class in Maryport Street must have a bearing on my aunt's disarrangements of

health ; that somehow her religion had a way of disagreeing with her.

I did not work this out at all thoroughly, though it lay at the back of my mind, and I should not tell what follows had she not, in her last illness, bound me by an oath to tell it.

I arose from my bed a cripple, with a misshapen back. There was nothing to do but apprentice me a clerk or set me to some such calling ; and it ended by Aunt Trinidad's binding me salesman to a book-seller in Redcliff, by St. Mary's Church. Here if I could not go on travels I could read about them when not serving customers ; for my master—Anstis by name—had a collection of books of voyages, and would often give me leave to take a volume home with me.

It happened on a night when Aunt Hannah had gone to her Bible-class that—either forgetting the injunction to be in bed by half-past nine, or maybe reckoning that I had outgrown it—I sat up in the parlour with one of these books, " A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Isle of Devils," by Sir Thomas Gates and others, when I heard a shaking of the door-latch, and ran out to the passage with the lamp as my aunt entered. To my

amazement, she came forward as not seeming to see me, although I stood right in front of her, but groping blind-fashion at the wall, and so pitched forward almost at my feet. I closed the door very swiftly, and, setting down the lamp, raised her in my arms. The truth was then plain—my aunt had been drinking.

I carried her upstairs to her bed, laid her upon it, and went very thoughtfully to my own. Next morning, to my great relief, she said nothing about it, and we avoided one another's eyes. I waited in some anxiety for the date of the next class, but she forbore from attending it.

It was, if my memory serves, on a night just six weeks later that I was awakened out of my first sleep by the sound of a man's voice uplifted in the parlour below, calling angrily :

"Fetch the plank! Fetch the plank for the ——'s!"—ending with a horrible oath.

These, at any rate, were the words that drummed in my ears as I fetched upright in bed, stiff and listening. Certainly I heard no more words, and it seemed impossible I could have heard these so distinctly. Voices were murmuring below. I groped

for my coat, slipped it over my nightshirt, and crept downstairs, still listening.

At the foot of the stairs the sound ceased. But, putting my hand to the door-ring, and pushing the door open to make sure, I stood like one taken in theft.

Three women were gathered around the table, which was oval in shape. On the far side sat my aunt, rigid, staring at me past the lamp—pushed a little aside—and across a china bowl which might well have held a hell's broth. For of her two guests the one resembled nothing more near than a witch, with a nose that curved down to her chin and a chin that curved up to her nose ; while the other, habited like a woman, seemed rather to be a man, and wore more than a few hairs along her square jaw to help the resemblance. This one lounged forward over the table in an easy, unbuttoned posture. Each of the three was furnished with a rummer-glass, and " the hag "—as for the moment I shall call her—held a short tobacco-pipe stuck between her nut-cracker jaws.

" Seraphim !" my aunt commanded, finding her voice, " Go back to your bed at once, boy ! "

Her face had turned to the colour of wood-ash,

and her eyes shone out of it very like the greenish flame that dances in a wreck-wood fire. Her long forefinger, pointing across my shoulder to the doorway, trembled betwixt downright rage and alarm.

"Caught!" The mannish woman, who had been raising her glass, held it steady for a moment, then took a sip from it and set it coolly down on the table. "Caught, Trinidad!" she repeated, with a great laugh that was almost a shout. "As I warned ye ——"

"Seraphim, go back to your bed!" My aunt still pointed. "Your dress—it isn't decent!" she added weakly.

The mannish woman shouted again at this.

"Here's three old women to be modest! And after what ——"

"Ann Bonney," said my aunt, turning upon her, "until now that boy has never disobeyed me in his life."

"Well, he has made a start, it seems," the big woman answered coolly. "And, by his look, he'll improve on it. Here, fetch over a chair, my lad. Chilled in the legs, are ye?" She must have perceived that my teeth chattered. "Come, take a pull at this!"—pushing me her glass.

"Seraphim!"

"I am not a child, Aunt Hannah," I managed to say.

My eyes, meeting hers, grew unsteady for a moment, and I glanced towards the third woman. She was looking down on the table, the pipe bobbing as her head nodded. I dare say this nodding came from her palsy; but I took it for approval, met my aunt's eyes a trifle more firmly, and reached out for the glass. The big woman gave it into my hand, and my fingers closed on the stem.

"Drink, lad!" she encouraged me. "Trinidad, sit you down and make the best of it. Make a clean breast, woman alive! He 's bound to know sooner or later, and when 'tis over, 'tis over, as Mary Reed said of her wedding!"

"Not to-night," my aunt protested, with a pause between the words.

But she had dropped back in her chair, and her voice had dropped. It was hoarse now, though still harsh.

I took a gulp of the drink. It had been heated, and was fiery with spirit. It put fire into me, who had never before tasted strong waters. It coursed to my heart, ran about it, and in a moment was dancing

through all the blood in my body. My legs no longer shivered. I knew myself for a man, and of a sudden that I had the whip-hand.

"Tell me, aunt," I demanded.

"That 's the way to speak!" Ann Bonney tapped on the table. "What 's your age, lad?"

"Aunt Hannah, ma'am, tells me I shall be seventeen come next April. I have her word for it."

The woman chuckled deep in her throat.

"And if 'tweren't for the twist in your back a fine son you 'd be before then for somebody. A great pair of shoulders you have, in spite of it; and a pair of legs, too, before you hid 'em under the table. Tell him, Trinidad."

"Not to-night," my aunt protested again.

She had rested an elbow on the arm of her chair. Her hand shook, shading her eyes.

Ann Bonney glanced across at the woman facing her, who kept nid-nodding her head, but gave no other sign. Then she, slowly drawing back the glass to her and ladling it full from the bowl, turned squarely upon my aunt.

"Well, I won't tell too much, Trinidad. I 'll spare your feelin's for to-night. But, as Kid used

to say, 'In the swim, or swim overboard,' and "—with a gross laugh—"I reckon none of us, at this lad's age, set store by a roost that was all hens. My heart!"—and here she stared down for the moment, as if spelling out some reflected image on the mahogany table-top, which my aunt ever took a pride in keeping polished—"my heart! To think o' the sugar we were at his age, and the sappy, and the canes we 've shrunk, too—drier than the lads we fiddled and danced with till the wind claimed 'em and danced their jolly bones away bit by bit at Corso Castle or Execution Dock. And this lad 's at the age you were, Trinidad, or nighing it, when ——"

"Ann Bonney, I forbid you!" my aunt quavered.

"Never you fear!" the big woman coaxed her. "I 'll tell him no more than it behoves." She swung round and faced me again. "My lad, I 'm Ann Bonney. Maybe you 've heard tell of me, maybe not. No? Then the more innocent the luckier, as counsel said when they hanged Darby Mullins by the neck. There 's folks know me by the name of Ann Masters. This hen gossip of ours across the table is Mrs. Jane Raidlaw, widow woman—that has settled down respectable in the fish trade. And

here 's your aunt that they call Aunt Trinidad—as maybe you know without my telling? Where 's Trinidad, now?"

She snapped the question out at me.

"It 's an island, ma'am, off the Spanish Main, and the closest of its size, sixty-one longitude, or thereabouts," answered I.

"That 's so. He has been looking it up in the map, as I 'd have wagered." She shook a monstrously thick finger at my aunt. "But you 're wrong, boy. That was never *her* Trinidad. There's up half-a-dozen Trinidads—first or last called by that name—scattered about the Indies. I mind one in the Bay of Honduras; another, a speck a'most, 'mongst the Leewards. 'Tis as this old skipper or that chose to give it a name, and another charted it or forgot. Your aunt's Trinidad, as I 'm told, was no island at all, then, but a point on the Turtle Island, or Tortuga as some call it—a short slip over nor'-west of Hispaniola."

"Ann Bonney!" my aunt put in, but feebly.

"You may talk when it comes to your turn, Trinidad. A point, I was saying; with a castle pitched pretty sheer above the cliff, and a flagstaff over its tower, and the rock steep, too, with

plenty water below it—six fathom, I shouldn't wonder."

"Nine," my aunt corrected her.

"Steep an' deep, anyway. 'Whose castle?' says you. A fine castle, anyhow, says I, with a great plantation of trees behind it, fit for any duke in this land; and further behind it a great sward o' grass rolling away for a league a'most, till you came to trees again and another and greater house, set in a very paradise. He that owned this called himself an Englishman, but was more than half Portugee. A fortune he had made, following the old custom of the island, hunting the wild cattle and selling their hides at Port de Paix; never tempted from that when half of the island men went crazed and took to sharing Spanish gold instead of cattle. Those were the early days—the good days, long afore ever I put on breeches an' cut my petticoat short. What makes your eyes so round, boy? I tell ye I've worn small-clothes in my time, more years than you 've been breeched, and Jane Raidlaw there, scores o' miles she 've tramped in 'em, first and last —a firelock on her shoulder, too—marching with the armies in Flanders. Whether or no your aunt ever put 'em on ——"

"Never!" put in my Aunt Hannah, sharp and firm.

"There 's no awkwardness, once you come to 'em. To this day I can't pass Leverett's slop-shop, by the foot o' the stairs below—especially in sou'-westerly weather, when the wind comes up the river and fills out the merry legs all a-dangling in a row under his sign —— But there, I 'm getting sentimental! But the good days were gone afore my time; days when your jolly rover sailed with the King's commission under his belt, and the Spanyer was anybody's game. Think of Bart Portugal, for one; think of Morgan; think of Kid—but *he* came late. Fairly dazzlin', the fortunes they made—ay, and *hid*—some of 'em. But, as a rule, 'twas light come and light go. A week in Puerto Plata, at old Moll Holloway's—'Good Entertainment for Man and Beast.' . Well, as I was telling, this man that owned the great house on Tortuga la Mar, as well as the castle down by the Point—what was his name, Trinidad?"

"Coster."

"Ay, Coster. This man had stuck to the hunting and boucanning—'hung on to the fresh meat,' as the saying went, and so, by safe profits and small, yet

not so small either, had made himself a proprietor on the west side of the island. But a wry, ill-featured man he was, and dainty of stomach.

"One day, being over at Port de Paix collecting money on a cargo of hides, this Coster falls in with a lad of fortune that had spent all his money and wanted a job. 'You 'll be no use to me across yonder,' says Coster. 'I 've hired dozens in your plight, and not a man could settle down to become my fore-hand after once coming off the Main.' 'Try me,' says the young man. 'No, I will not,' says Coster; 'but I 've heard you well spoken of for honesty, Mr.—Raymond.' Eh, Trinidad?"

My aunt bent her head, affirming it. As I write this I can see her eyes, aslant under her brow and shaded by her rusty cap-ribbon, watching Ann Bonney as a cat watches a bird on a branch.

"Yes, Raymond—Raymond de Noe—a young Frenchman brought up to speak English. 'Mr. Raymond,' says Coster, 'I can give you a job of another sort, if you care for it; for I must warn you 'tis something out of the way. I want a wife,' he says, 'French or English, it don't concern me; but I want an honest woman, and I don't reckon there 's a white one in all Hispaniola. I want sons,' says he,

'to take over the estate when I 'm gone. Naturally I 'd like her to be personable,' says Coster; 'but the mischief is, I can't leave my business to look for her. Now what say you, Mr. Raymond, to taking ship for Europe, with money in your pocket, and fetching me such a woman. You can tell her that she has only to behave herself, and she 'll live on the fat of the land.' Well, of course, Raymond knew himself in luck's way, and the bargain was struck—not so queer a bargain, either, as it may look to us, sitting here in Bristol City. For what says Solomon—and him with his experience —of a virtuous woman? 'Her price is above rubies,' hey? 'Twas all that, and more, anywheres in Hispaniola.

"Your aunt about that time was a brisk girl, little more than husband-high, and lived at Watchet, down the Somerset coast, where she was serving-maid and drudge to an inn called, if I remember, the Old Leg of Mutton; a tall springy girl, pretty as paint, with a bloom on her like cream o' roses for all her hard living; full of maids' thoughts, too, I shouldn't wonder—ask her! But portionless.

"One fine day, down upon Watchet drops this young Raymond, with money in his pocket. He puts up at the Old Leg of Mutton, and you may wage

'twasn't long his eye took to single out this aunt of yours. Before the end of a week he had run himself alongside, and was out with his grappling-irons. 'Would she like to be a rich lady, stuck all over with diamonds, instead of dwelling in Watchet all her days a-washing of dishes? Could she bring herself to marry a friend of his, not so very old, and order about black servants by the dozen?' Can a duck swim? Before the month was out your aunt was on shipboard with this Raymond, and way-to-go for Hispaniola. But cat will after kind, lad—as belike you 've discovered without my telling—and cat will lap milk. Raymond, as I told you, was a young man, and lively, shaped for love. On the passage out ——"

"False! All of it false!" my Aunt Hannah broke in furiously. "He never breathed one word ——"

"Who said he ever did?" Ann Bonney took her up. "Words? Oh, up helm and down wind with such talk! If a man can't court a maid without words!"

She leaned back, chuckling, with her hands to her paunch.

My aunt struck a hand on the table.

" I tell you," she insisted, the words almost choking her—and I could see the front of her turnover shawl heaving as her hard old bosom panted for breath—" I tell you, Raymond de Noe never broke his faith ; not for an instant ! He loved me, true as man can love woman ; but his first word of it was held back until I had given the ' No ' to this Coster, there in the patio of his great house of Bon Accord. A great verandah ran round the court, and there in the cool, in a low hammock, the man was lolling and twisting tobacco when Raymond brought me to him. He did not stand up. He eyed me. He nodded. ' She will do,' said he to Raymond ; ' you have earned your balance. How much ? ' For some reason Raymond did not answer. Coster turned his eyes ; they looked me up and down ; they were lazy, but already they seemed to feast on me. ' Good,' he said, ' I will marry you.' There was no priest. A mulatto brought a paper, and began to read it, Coster telling me it was the contract always used on the islands. I do not know how the bride's contract ran, nor the end of the bridegroom's, which was first read. But it began :

" ' I, Philip Marie Coster, take thee, Hannah Trudgian, without knowing or caring to know what

thou art. I do not desire thee to give account of thy past conduct, because I have no right to be offended at aught done before I owned thee, and when thou couldst behave ill or well at thy pleasure.'

" Upon that I flew on him, there in the hammock, and beat his face with both hands."

Ann Bonney drummed the foot of her glass upon the table for applause. After a catch of the breath, Aunt Hannah went on, her words coming in short rushes of seven or eight at a time, more and more rapidly.

" It was Raymond who dragged me off. I swung full about to claw him, for at that moment I hated him worst of them all, or thought I did. But I looked in his face, and then I let my hands fall, and fell to crying bitterly. Upon that, two blacks easily caught my wrists and held me.

" Coster was furious with Raymond, and swore he should not touch a penny of the balance money. As for me, I should be taken down to the castle on Point Trinidad and brought to my senses on bread and water. He, my lover, glanced about him, and shrugged his shoulders. The odds were too heavy: six men, not counting Coster, against a man and a girl.

All Coster's men carried pistols, as well as a short sabre a-piece.

"'Ah, well! *Bonne espérance*, then!' said he lightly; but speaking the last words very low, for my hearing, as he turned about.

"And so he walked out of the patio.

"They took me down to the castle, and there for a week I fared hardly. But my spirit, after three days, was not broken. And the fourth night, looking from my window over the sea, I saw the light of a fishing-boat pretty close inshore. At first it shone steadily, then it moved three times up and down, then three times crossways, in a way no heave of the sea could account for. I fetched my lamp, and standing by the window imitated the signal. It was answered as before. Then I knew that Raymond was there, and with a boat.

"How did I break out? That was easy. A door on the stairs locked me from the lower part of the tower. But I had the run of the two upper floors, and there was a trap leading to the roof where the flagstaff stood. On the fourth night I mounted there to the leads, for a look about my prison. I suppose it never entered Coster's head that I should throw myself over, and yet that might have happened

had things gone differently. But what mainly took my curiosity was the flagstaff, and specially the halliards to it, that was new, of good hemp, and thick as a man's middle finger.

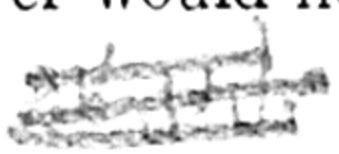
"The next day I spent in hard thinking. For the trouble was that a heavy surf beat upon the rocks below my tower, and I could not swim three strokes. But late in the afternoon the gaoler brought me a written letter from Coster. It was short and sharp. He was a forgiving man (it said), and liked spirit in a woman. But in three days he 'd either marry or hang me, and he gave me that time to choose.

"That set my wits working faster, you may be sure; and the word 'hang' at once brought my mind to the halliard-rope on the flagstaff, so that I guessed why it was there newly rove and of that thickness.

"There were two large water-gourds in my room, the one for washing, the other half full of drinking water. Each was fitted with a large cork. I emptied them both, refitted the corks, and then, you see, I had a couple of good floats, with handles, too, whereby a cord could be fastened to run over shoulder round under the armpits.

"The sea ran with a swell that night. But as soon as I had answered Raymond's signal, I climbed

to the flagstaff, undid the halliards, and with one end knotted a bowline-hitch around back and breast. From this—if you follow—the rope led up to the truck of the staff, through a sheave-hole there and down again to the leads, where the slack of it made a goodish coil of six fathoms. My chance lay in this slack, for the tower would not be less than fifty feet high.



" You see, it was as simple as simple. I had only to grip the slack, keeping it taut, climb out over the edge of the battlement, and pay out foot by foot, letting myself down as easy as in a cradle. I won't say I wasn't scared, there in the dark and the wind. It scared me worse to think of what would happen when I came to the end of the slack.

" As it turned out, when I came to the end, and let the rope go with a run, there was only twelve or fifteen feet to fall, and I broke no bones. Cut a bit I was, and bruised, but nothing to signify. I could see Raymond's boat, a little beyond the surf, and another thought came to me. Hand by hand I pulled the whole slack to me through the sheave-hole till the spare end pitched at my feet. To the spare end I made fast a good-sized stone, and flung it out over the water. Three times it fell short, or

Raymond missed it ; but the fourth time he caught it with a cry, and, hauling taut as I came to him, drew me through the smother to the boat.

" But either that cry of his had been heard or the noise of my rope when it had dropped on the leads. For as he helped me on board and laid me choking in the stern-sheets, there came a shot from the lower window of the tower, and—the curse of curses be upon one that made such a hit in the dark !—almost as I heard it, my lover pitched with the heave of the sea, and fell full length over me—dead—between my breasts, his blood running —— "

Aunt Trinidad reached her gaunt arms along the table, and bowed her head between them, her body shaken with dry, horrible sobs.

Ann Bonney rose slowly and put her hand upon the poor, heaving shoulders.

" I didn't know, Trinidad ! Oh, Trinidad, was it like *that ?* " She turned to me gruffly. " Boy, you 're shivering. Take another pull, and be off to bed instanter !"

II

THE LAST VOYAGE OF CAPT. SHARP

My Aunt Hannah was up betimes next morning, and while I dressed myself she kept up a clatter beyond ordinary with the fire-irons, kettle, and breakfast cups. Breakfast was ready and waiting for me when I came downstairs, with bacon hissing in the pan and sausages on the grid. She must have fared forth early to buy the sausages, for I am certain there had been none in the house overnight.

Belike—I could never tell how her mind worked—these sausages, an uncommon luxury, hinted at propitiation. But I could read no propitiation in her eye, and after a glance at her, took my seat meekly as usual. We ate in silence.

We always breakfasted in the kitchen. Had we been seated in the parlour at the round table, it might have cost a sterner effort to avoid some allusion to last night and the bowl of bishop; but her eye, when once or twice I met it, forbade me to refer to

last night with so much as a hint. At the back of her forbiddance, too, I read a sort of hard triumph. She was not in the least degree bilious. This time she had not been drinking too much. So, with scarcely a word between us, I went through the meal, and presently made my way off to the bookselling.

So the matter lay closed between us for near upon a fortnight, and as it had been closed, so its re-opening was preluded (as I may put it) by a dish of sausages at breakfast. To this day my memory associates the smell of toasted sausage with the sealings and unsealings of my aunt's confessional.

I dare say that I sniffed in some apprehension at the savour. It came into my mind that if the Bible-class in Maryport Street continued to meet fortnightly, to-night was the date, and recollecting this, I glanced across the table, to find my aunt's eyes fixed on my face.

"Seph," she said, after a pause, "I ought to tell you that I am expecting company to-night."

Her voice was firm; her eyes encountered mine quite steadily, and stared them down. But I noted that the point of either cheek-bone showed a reddish flush.

"Yes, aunt?" said I. "The same two?"

"The same two," she replied, and paused for a moment. "They are old acquaintances of mine. We have seen much wickedness together, by the Almighty's will. It does not become us—it certainly does not become a boy of your age—to inquire too narrowly into His purpose. I have hopes ——"

Her eyes lost their grip on mine, and wandered towards the great Bible on the window-seat.

"You wish me to keep out of the way, this time?" I asked.

Again she paused, and for a long while, before answering:

"I am not sure that I do. You are growing to a man, Seph, and I have a great mind to leave it to your conscience. The Lord has seen fit, by afflicting you, to take out of your path many stumbling-blocks on which an active young man might fall to the ruin of his immortal soul, and, moreover, had you the full use of your limbs and all the hot blood of youth to feed 'em, the days are past (I thank God) when you could have been tempted to such wickedness as I have seen."

"It is strange, aunt, to think of you ——" I began, and I dare say that my voice showed feeling,

for I had a genuine affection for her, though she had never encouraged it.

"I must ask you, Seph," she put in sharply, cutting me short, "never to think of me between whiles, or to let your mind dwell and speculate on these—these ——"

"But, aunt," said I, "after what you told us—well then, after what Mrs. Bonney told us the other night, you sitting by and not denying it—how is it possible that I can put thought of it out of my head? This body of mine may be maimed, but it holds no less blood for that, and must bleed if you stab it."

"Blood?" said my aunt, with a shiver, staring down suddenly on the tablecloth. "Who talked of blood?"

"You did."

"You have been reading a pack of nonsensical books up at the shop!"

"Maybe yes, maybe no," said I; "but anyhow, Aunt Hannah, you are all I have in the world, kith or kin, and after hearing what I heard the other night, how can I help wanting to know more?" I stood up.

Now I cannot tell in what fashion it had been conveyed to me; but I had a sense, almost from the beginning of our talk, that my aunt secretly wished

me to be present that evening. I cannot tell her reason, though I guess that she had not one but several, all tending to it. To begin with, I had detected her main secret, and there was now little point in being less than honest with me. Further, I suspect that she valued me as a restraint upon her when she met the bowl of bishop face to face on the table; and also, I hazard, she wished to convince me that it was her habit to be temperate. But I need scarcely say that she advanced none of these reasons.

"If you attend," said she, "it is on two strict conditions, the first, that we never speak of these meetings between whiles; the second, that you confine yourself to two glasses. For the rest, as I said, I leave it to your conscience."

"Then it 's easy," I answered her. "I want to know what became of you when you were left, tossing off the island, in that boat?"

"That you may learn or you may not, Seph," she replied. "And now we 'll say not another word about it. But, oh, boy! boy! I would I were sure it is not leading you astray! If the Lord would only give me some sign that I do right by letting you into this knowledge of evil, that the knowledge may warn you against temptation!"

Now this, when I was a boy, was a way of teaching much favoured by older folk: the principle being that virtue could best be inculcated in the young by showing them how horribly its opposite ended in this world as well as in the next; how that the wages of sin is indeed death (and mostly on the gallows) and by tracing this doom back to its source in the smallest of juvenile misdoings. But I doubt this being the mainspring of my aunt's desire to have the pleasure of my company that evening.

Ann Bonney, at all events, put up no such pretence.

"Well," said she, beaming broadly on me across the steam of the liquor which Aunt Trinidad had mixed with astonishing deftness, "I call this cosy! Comfort there is at all times, and is meant to be, in a bowl of punch properly mixed, but never the true-blue flavour for yours respectfully Ann Bonney 'nless seated gun to gun with a man facin' me over it. A tidy man you look, too, young Seraphim Johns, so long as you stay full front and seated. You've a proper pair of shoulders, and half closin' my eye I could mistake you at this moment for Sawkins, or for Bat Roberts at his best."

She lifted her glass. "Here's the old toast: 'Galloon or wherry, a short life and a merry!'

There, down it goes, and as newest joined you have first call on the yarn."

"I was wanting," stammered I, "to hear the rest of the last one; how she—how Aunt Trinidad"—I ventured the name and blushed—"escaped in that boat?"

"Bray-vo!" It was an extraordinary sight to see this great haystack of a woman slap her thigh, quite as though her full skirts had been a pair of breeches—but I saw it. "Trinidad, the boy has picked up his pluck to call you by your right name. That 's out with grappling-irons, that is!" She caught her glass again, and lifted it to me, winking over the brim. "You 've a sweet nephew, Trinidad, and he wants to know ——"

"Then he won't," my aunt snapped on her. "I told my tale last time, or let you tell it for me. If he wants to hear the rest, I tossed out there all night—there, in the boat, with the dead body. And then, in the daybreak, along came Sharp with his ship and picked us up."

"On his way out from Port de Paix, and pushing over t'ards the Main. *You* take up the tale, Jane Raidlaw: for you was aboard, by all accounts, and can tell what Trinidad won't."

My eyes turned to the woman Raidlaw, who sat stirring her hot drink with a spoon, while her nose and underjaw worked together as though they mumbled a bone. She was the only one of the three that used a spoon, as though the sugar had not been wholly dissolved in her drink; but it was, and I gathered, somehow, that this action of stirring was mainly used by her as some sort of control upon her nid-nodding palsy. She did not seem to hear Ann Bonney, but for half-a-minute went on stirring with her spoon, apparently chasing some substance that had found its way into the drink and was held there, floating obstinate against solution. Of a sudden—and so suddenly that I all but fell back in my chair—she let out a high, shrill cackle.

"Aboard? 'Course I was!"

She stirred the drink again, and again cackled.

—"I mind the sightin' of 'em. I mind 'em as they was brought alongside, she and her pretty dead fellow. Sharp's last v'yage it was; the first I ever sailed, with him or with any man—and Sharp's last."

"Tell us, Jane," murmured Ann Bonney coaxingly.

But my aunt's eyes were fixed on the old crone as a hawk's on its quarry.

"His last v'yage," intoned Mrs. Raidlaw, her voice searching up and down as if for a note on which it could find rest. "Sharp's last v'age." She looked up for the first time, and straight at me. Her head bobbed at me, and seemed to take up a challenge fiercely. "Who says a word against Sharp? *You?*"

"Not me, ma'am," I protested. "Until a moment ago I had never heard his name spoken."

"Not a one here present, Jane," Ann Bonney assured her. "A gentleman he was, and I never heard breath lifted to deny that."

"Ay, a gentleman—always a gentleman, and different by that to the whole later truck." Mrs. Raidlaw's eyes searched the depth of her glass again, and her head worked on her neck like a pendulum for many seconds before her voice broke out, high and abrupt as before.

"And I was his wife!"

"Ay, to be sure," murmured Ann Bonney.

"I was his wife, sir." She turned her eyes on me proudly and yet humbly, as though I had been my Lord Chief Justice hearing her cause. Throughout the next twenty minutes, or so long as it took to complete her story, she alternated between addressing

me, making her points with an eye that pierced into mine, and appealing to an imaginary jury-box in the opposite wall of my aunt's parlour.

"I was his wedded wife, as there 's law in England. When I first met him he was hard pressed and his end near, though he would never allow it. No, not to the last would he ever cry quarter. A man in his prime, you understand. Like your Aunt Trinidad, ——" She hesitated, and I had a sense that she had just stopped short of calling me "my lord." "Like your aunt, sir, I started life no better than a waiting-maid at an inn. Mine was the Half Moon in the Borough. I had been in service there scarce twelve months when he turned up, and with plenty of money in his pockets. But for some reason he took a fancy to me, and got into the way of talking with me, and I gathered by this and by that, in one way and another, that he was hard pressed and in hiding. His danger lay along the waterside, and he had come up to the Borough the better to hide. But on the fourth day the runners took him. Big men they were in red weskits; and to Newgate he went.

"Captain Sharp he was, a captain of the King's Navy, and as such had been sailing under letters of privilege, which saved his neck in the end. But

being ashore and with time on his hands, it seemed as if he 'd picked up a fancy for me. That was how I took it at first—a fancy, and no more—me being just part-waitress part-chamber-maid there at the Half Moon. But the night afore he was took he put it to me straight. ' Jane,' said he, ' I won't deny as I 've fallen alongside more 'n one woman, first and last ; but you,' said he, ' are the first woman I couldn't love without offering marriage.' Fine hearing it was for a mere maid at an inn.

" And the next day the runners took him. I knew nothing o' what he 'd done to get into his Majesty's black books. I only knew as he was splendid, and young for his age. When they took him he looked at me cunnin'-like, and said : ' Someone 's been and put them on my track ; but I 'll never blame *you*, my girl.'

" Nor he hadn't any cause to blame me. I 'd have laid down my life for him. Whereby next day I made him a cake with my own hands and took it to him in Newgate. And ' Jane,' said he, taking me by both wrists and looking me in the eyes, ' you 're a good girl, and if ever I get out of this I 'll marry you, so help me God ! '

" After that I stood by him at the Old Bailey and

watched his trial. The folks at the Half Moon made sure he 'd be hanged. So I threw up my job with them and took a lodging in a top room nigh Newgate Street, and tided it out on my last shillings.

"There was a deal of hard swearing at the trial; and afterwards I learnt as I could have been of great use to him by going about and hiring witnesses. If I 'd but known of this, I 'd have trodden my feet to the bone. But, as it turned out, there was no need. He had the King's paper for his great standby, and the Chief Justice put it so to the jury that they acquitted him. Late at night it was when they brought in their verdict, and the candles burning low, and the judge leaning forward so that they singed his wig almost. '*Not guilty*,' said the foreman of the jury ——"

"Ay," said Ann Bonney, catching her breath inwards very sharp and quick. "I know that moment. Twice I 've knowed it: the first at Cape Corso Castle, and the next time when 'twas my own neck in the halter. What was the charge, say you? Piracy?"

"Piracy on the high seas. He told me later 'twas the framing of the charge that saved him. On any other count it might have gone hard. But with the

King's letter in his breast pocket, done up in a skin bag, wherein he 'd wrapped and kept it since the day he got it off the Governor at Port Royal, and with him hiring a tailor to dress him out for the trial, and looking a gallant officer down to his shoe-buckles, and the easy way he carried himself, using his snuff box, and pressing it on the turnkey between whiles ——"

"Ay, I believe," chimed in my Aunt Trinidad, leaning forward in her eagerness. "Gentlemen o' fortune they sailed in those days. The trade was going down even when I first knew it, and in blood and dirt and common manners it ended. But the great captains that I 've seen at Puerto Plata and Port de Paix lording it on the quays in their flowered-silk waistcoats, and the small swords at their hips, and their pistol-butts crusted with great sapphires. And your man, Jane, was one of that school, I will say; large in his manners as my lord, though I doubt his commission was a forged one."

"Forged it never was, Trinidad. He got it off the Governor himself, along with Sawkins—Sawkins of the *Monarch*—and I 've heard as the price of it was no more than ten pieces-of-eight. Also I won't say that, to start with, the commission held for more than

three months. But, my heart! the things they did upon it! crossing the Isthmus, forcing the Bocca Chico, and at Panama holding up the city itself—not to mention the fight off Perico where they met the admiral's fleet, three to five, and took the whole five, besides beating off three small *armadillas*. Coxon was in command then, afterwards Sawkins, and later on, when Sawkins died storming Puebla Nueva, Sharp was elected to command. There was great days before they quarrelled and parted; and a show they made sweeping down the North Pacific after the Peru fleet, Sharp in the biggest of the prizes, the *Santissima Trinidada*, with a red flag and a bunch of white and green ribbons at the truck; Sawkins flew red and yellow.

"Harris, Coxon, Sawkins, all were dead in their shoes, and Sharp, returning, fetched the whole company across and back to Antigua. They had buried a good half of their plunder somewhere on the Main, and even so they came to Antigua deep-hulled. But there the Governor refused him entry; so, after long parleying, he took passage home on board a ship called the *Lisbon Merchant*.

"I reckon he knew that information had been laid

against him. That 's why he chose to take hiding in the Borough. But the Chief Justice, God bless him, was a stickler for law, and there was his commission of private enterprise, signed, and in order. So '*Not guilty*,' said the foreman of the jury, and with that I caught at the rail in front of me and burst out a-sobbing. 'Take that young woman out,' said his lordship, very stern of a sudden. So an usher put his hand to my shoulder and forced me out into the fresh air outside. And what next do I see but Captain Sharp himself, a freeman, standing in the sunshine of the flags of the courtyard and smiling down on me.

"'Jane,' says he, 'stop heaving your shoulders like that. And Jane, my precious,' says he, 'you 've a great knack o' making cakes, and I 've a great mind to marry you to-morrow—that 's to say, if you 're willing,' says he, very delicate-like.

"So married next day we were, at the Fleet, and I as proud a woman as London held. But next morning he showed himself restless. 'This London chokes my windpipe,' says he. 'You 're the best girl in the world, and, by Heaven, I 'll make fit to show you something better than these stinking streets. It 's a Queen I 'll make of you before we 're done,' says he.

And we walked down (I the happy !) to Blackfriars, where we hired a wherry. That, as I may say, was the start of his last voyage.

" For, a little below London Bridge, he checked the man that was pulling us, and told him to lay on his oars. He had been looking about him sharply from the start, and his eyes had lit on an old Thames barge lying derelict close off the right bank, under a tanner's wharf and store. She 'd her sails bent—for no better reason, I reckon, than that it didn't pay labour to unbend 'em. But for the rest she was derelict, as I say, and even to me, that knew naught of the sea or of shipping in those days, she looked rotten as touchwood, so that I wondered how my husband found it worth while to let his eyes dwell on her. But it seemed that she took his fancy hugely : for first of all he made our waterman row twice around her, and then we pulled alongside, where he examined her upper timbers for a while, and lastly nothing would do but the pair of us must be set on board. The most interest I took in her was the way she stank of hides. But Sharp made nothing of that. Half an hour he spent—maybe less—walking the deck and overhauling her, specially, as I noted, peering her rigging over, and now and then pulling

with all his weight on the running gear. He took no notice at all of me, that stood watching him, and now and again taking a glance at the London shore across the shipping, and thinking all the time what a funny thing 'twas to be married . . . and the waterman standing by and keeping his wherry against the tide.

"But my husband had not forgotten me. For at the end he came aft to where I was standing, and 'Lass, she 'll do,' says he, 'if I can strike the bargain.' 'What will she do for?' I asked. 'Why, for the Indies,' says he, laughing. 'Oh, Bat,' says I, my eyes round in my head and at the same time filling with tears, 'to the Indies in *this*?' 'Why not, lass?' 'Well,' said I, 'you 're my husband since yesterday; and I 'd liefer drown with you than live with another man.' He laughed at this, and gave me a great kiss. Then he hailed the waterman, and was put ashore at the tannery, turning in the stern sheets to blow back another kiss as he went.

"So for the best part of an hour I was left, and all my companionship the tide-water lap-lapping on the bows of the barge. But when he came rowing back he was almost beside himself with joy. He had bought the barge for twenty pound, not a penny more.

"'And now, Jenny,' says he, 'you must be a brave girl, and bide here on the forsaken hulk a couple of hours longer, or maybe, three.' 'Alone?' says I, my heart sinking. 'Alone,' says he, 'while I fetch your box o' clothes from the inn and pick up my crew, and collect a few duds with anceteras.' 'Your crew?' says I. 'What crew?' 'That 's as they may turn out,' says he; 'but I 'll give leave to any man in England to collect better than Cap'n Sharp will collect in Wapping inside o' the next three hours. And then for the Indies, my lass!' 'What?' says I, again. —'To the Indies, in *this?*' Whereat he laughed again. 'If you have the pluck,' said he, 'you shall sail most of the way in a state-room of your own, with black slaves to attend on ye.' 'I know not your meaning,' said I, 'but I swore, not twenty-four hours agone, to honour and obey you in all things.' 'Now I know I 've married a wife,' said he; and so left me, and was rowed over to a landing by London Bridge.

"The shore clocks had struck five afore I caught sight of him again, tiding across, the same waterman rowing him. He had fetched my box from the inn, too; but he had also brought a suit of lad's slops, in the which he asked me to dress myself in

the after cabin. 'For,' said he, ''twill be on the safe side with such a crew as I 've had time to pick together. Sixteen of 'em,' says he, wiping his handsome forehead ; 'which for a single afternoon's work is pretty tidy, but I can't answer for their morals at this short notice.'

"It seemed to me that sixteen was an overpowering crew for such a rotten shell as the *Janet* of London, as our new home called herself.

"While I changed into man's duds, and took stock of myself, as well as might be without a glass, my husband put over for London shore again, and by and by came tiding over with our cargo—butter and cheese for the most part, with a case of arms, two dozen pieces of salt beef, and a couple of barrels he wouldn't give a name to, but I took note that he hauled 'em carefully. There was a keg of brandy, too, and the waterman, having taken his pay, wished us a good passage to Ramsgate.

"At seven o'clock our crew arrived in a sort of long-boat, sixteen of them sure enough, and three-fourths of them more than three-fourths drunk. They tumbled inboard, and were for falling asleep all about the deck as they fell. But Sharp kicked them awake and moving, and before midnight we

were dropping down the river on the tide, with the long-boat in tow.

" There was a light northerly breeze blowing, and he managed it so that two days later at nightfall—the barge sailing like a slug—we anchored in the Downs. He had picked his station there in the dusk, pretty close alongside a French schooner of three hundred tons and over.

" The *Bel Esprit* was her name, and a little before midnight came the reason why we had been towing the long-boat all that way. For the crew—by this time sober—tumbled into her, boarded the Frenchey, and had possession of her with scarce so much as ' by your leave.' The skipper surrendered without a shot fired; and Sharp, for his politeness, transhipped him and his crew on board the *Janet* of London. After changing ships we sank the long-boat.

" No, I 'm telling it in too much of a hurry. By this time there was a pretty thick fog rolling up Channel, so that after transhipping the Frenchmen we had some ado—as I remember—to make the schooner. But we made her in time, and then, as I was overhauling my new quarters, a new notion struck my husband.

" He dropped down a tidy way, and then, pushing a

brace of pistols into my hand, and swearing to me that he would return at the first bark of them, he ordered out the long-boat again, and himself with ten men pulled for land. Creeping over Romney Marsh that night through the mist they rounded up six head of cattle, and slaughtered them there before dawn on the shore. And next morning early, still in the fog—of which he made no account, swearing he could smell his way to Ushant,—my lord was off, laughing at all the King's officers and all the King's men.

" They never took him, neither. We ran down the Bay o' Biscay, and picked up the Trades, blithe and steady, the crew grumbling little of naught by reason of a good store of *eau-de-vie* that was found aboard the Frenchman, my husband doling it out all the time fair and impartial. As for me, he 'd say, ' Jane, my dear, I swore to make a lady of ye, and I 'm doing it pretty fair already, you must own. But when we comes to the Main, where my money 's hid, you shall be a queen, lass. And a comb of diamonds you shall wear on your head, and carry a fan of ivory.' Ah, me, the merry days ! So, being victualled, we gave a pretty wide berth to the islands, where danger was for him, until we came to the north side of Hispaniola, and put in at Port de Paix. Two days

we anchored there, none gainsaying, and the night of the third it was—as I remember—that, putting across the Main, we picked up *you*, Trinidad—you and your lover."

"God, how I envied you, Jane Raidlaw—Jane Sharp as you was then!" my aunt broke in upon her. "When, as they took me up the ladder, someone said, 'He 's a done man, stiff and cold!' And I heard them lump my lad's body over the boat's gunwale."

"Ay, it pleases a woman to be envied," nid-nodded Mrs. Raidlaw, reaching out to refill her glass. But with her palsy she was unequal to the effort, and my aunt ladled the glass full with a steady hand. "Six days you envied me, belike, or maybe seven. And then, what was the end of it? What was the end of it for *me*, that, with justice under Heaven, should be riding in my chariot at this moment? A brush with a British interloper that in any ordinary way Sharp would have despised. 'We have the legs of her whenever we choose,' said he, standing beside me in the waist. 'We 'll but tarry to give her a taste of our quality.' And, with that, as a whiff passed overhead, brushing my hair, he sat down straight and stiff upon a gun-carriage not a foot away.

"'Lass,' he said, 'they 've done for me. Dear,

the silly I 've been.' And with that he fell sideways and died."

"A gentleman to the last, Jane. Call me for witness."

"Ay, Trinidad."

"One of the old school."

There fell a silence around the table. I had a question on my lips, but my aunt's eyes checked me.

"That 's enough for to-night, boy," said she firmly.

III

CAPTAIN BRAS-DE-FER'S PEARL FISHING

You may guess that many times during the next fortnight my thoughts ran forward eagerly to the next meeting of Aunt Trinidad's "Night-class"—as Ann Bonney facetiously called it—and with what speculations upon the singular adventure of which, either from my aunt's lips or from Mrs. Raidlaw's, I was determined to learn the issue. But enlightenment did not come in that way; nor, when it came, did it answer all the questions I had been putting to myself. On the other hand, while answering some of them, it led me into deeper wonders.

As the reader knows, it had been agreed—and for my part, I had passed my word—that in the interim no syllable should be exchanged between us concerning what I had heard. To this understanding we both were strict. But on the morning of the Night-class I came down to our kitchen to find my aunt stooping over the hearth, grilling sausages.

"There 's a packet of writing by your plate," said she, not turning about, but bending and stabbing deftly at the sausages with a two-pronged fork. "Put it in your pocket and read it later at the business."

She and the sausages seemed to hiss together on this last word as she brought my breakfast to table. She showed a red flush on the point of either cheek-bone; but this, no doubt, came from stooping with the gridiron over a hot fire. Her manner had the old authority, and forbade further word. Without question, I slipped the parcel—a thin one—into my breast-pocket and tackled the sausages.

But in Mr. Anstis' shop, in an early interval of serving, I took occasion to break the packet. It was sealed, and the seal had been impressed with my aunt's thimble.

It contained a covering letter of five pages, folded and closely-written in a criss-crossed scrawl. At first glance it was evident that, in the habitual gloom of Mr. Anstis' shop, these sheets would take a deal of deciphering. So I began with the letter. It ran:

"My dear Seraphim,—I foresee that you will be wanting to know to-night a great deal more than, in

the presence of Mrs. Raidlaw and Mrs. Bonney, I should feel inclined to tell you. The enclosed is true, though hard to write because of my eyesight, and you will see that I have been at a great deal of trouble. I may have left some things out, but you must not ask me any more about it. Let us wait on the Lord, who looks after our goings-out and our comings-in. I pray Him to bless and guide you, though it do not answer to expectations in this world, we being but dust in the balance of His account.—

"Your affectionate aunt,

"HANNAH TRUDGIAN."

This was clear enough to read, though puzzling to understand. I turned to its fellow-document, and this is what, bit by bit, I deciphered. (I have corrected my aunt's spelling throughout. For her age and date it was tolerable, but she followed a system of her own.) There was no headline. It began in a crabbed hand :

With the sudden and foolish death of Captain Sharp—which happened just as Mrs. Raidlaw related —our cruise as suddenly and as foolishly lost all

guidance, having lost its head. We now know that the captain's real purpose was to make the Main and recover what treasure he had hidden there—which, according to Jane, was a prodigious sum. But I do not believe that she knew much about it. For this reason he had kept his secret close, and the crew supposed no more than that they were bound on a prize-taking adventure to beat the seas somewhere off Cape St. Antony, which is the westernmost point of Cuba, and watch the passage between that island and the Main. — For I should tell you that the merchants of Campeachy in those days plied a good trade around the land to Caracas and the isles of Margaret and Trinity, and in sizable vessels. These vessels sailed the winter and returned in the summer; and our gentlemen of fortune, knowing their seasons, would lie in wait for them in the narrow channel.

Our ship being single, the crew readily argued it out among themselves that this end had been in Captain Sharp's mind, though, to be sure the season was growing late. As for Mistress Sharp, whom we all took in her man's clothes to be the captain's son, as from the start he had pretended—as for the captain's son, then—as I will put it—he openly

allowed that his father had told him nothing, or next to nothing, yet that this might well have been his purpose. But on their assigning me, as with some compassion they did, to the dead man's cabin to recover my spirits, and being for a short while left to himself to indulge his grief at losing a father, this young gallant cast himself on his knees beside my berth, and, with a gush of tears, confessed that he was no man at all, but a woman, and the late captain's wife.

So there were we cast together, a young widow and a maid that had to mourn a lover, yet with no time for either of us to mourn : for God knew in what peril we might be standing, alone in a ship and among men who, by their profession, owed little obedience to law and none at all to honesty or truth.

Yet God sent us help beyond our hope. For the command now fell to the mate, an old Frenchman named Tributor, who, indeed, was the only soul on board capable of navigating ; whereby, in this present pass, he gave the law on board, and my companion, though heir to the ship by rights, was unable to gainsay him, had she wished to.

This Tributor was shrewd and not more than reasonably dishonest. He did not guess the truth ;

but his behaviour, though it made for his profit, brought to us both so marvellous easy a deliverance that I doubt the Lord had given him a good heart also. At any rate, he came, two days later, to the cabin as we two were talking together, planning this and that way out of our plight, and, says he, addressing himself to Jane :

" Young sir, we are in a fix, and it all comes—to speak with respect—of your father having kept himself so close. He was a fine seaman and known throughout the islands for a born leader. He got together, I don't mind telling you, a crew so honest that 'tis a pleasure to handle them. But they are seamen too, though too ignorant to navigate; and they allow your father must have brought you up to some land trade, since, by your leave, you don't seem hardly to know a vessel's bow from her stern. What 's more, they allow that 'tis foolishness to beat the channel at this season, and I must say that I agree with them, though I would have steered under Captain Sharp blindfold. So here 's the proposal, on behalf of all : that, instead of chasing this wild goose further, we up-helm and back to Puerto Plata, and there sell the schooner and share out."

He pulled a paper from his pocket.

"We took some trouble drawing it up," he said; "and, of course, we don't yet know what the sale will fetch. But me and my shipmates, in our degrees, have all met with a disappointment through your poor father," he wound up, "and I hope, young sir, you will find your proportion a fair one."

Now this, in a way, was robbery, the ship being Jane's. But in another way it was salvation straight dropped out of Heaven, and when, reading his paper, this Tributor made it clear that one-fifth of the profit was to be hers, I kept a taut eye on Jane, praying all the while to myself that she would not break down.

Tributor added:

"And as to this lady here, she won't look for a share, of course, not having shipped with us. But the crew, as I 've said, is a decent crew, and I 've bargained that she 's to be left in your hands, to deal honest with her, as I hope, in such way as may be agreed upon between you."

This — though he did not know it — was offering salvation to the pair of us. To cut short this part of my story, Jane affected to bluster for a minute or so, but ended by accepting his terms, and with a thankful heart. She told me later that

she had, moreover, a good sum of money waiting for her at Puerto Plata, where Captain Sharp had sold the cargo of the *Bel Esprit* that he took in the Downs; as also he, amid much carelessness, had been careful to draw up a will leaving her all his possessions. This will she kept inside her waistcoat, sewed, along with her marriage-lines, and so far was so good; but, although we hunted through his chest together, and through the ship's papers, a dozen times during the passage back to Hispaniola, not a paper could we find that hinted where his main treasure lay, or even that there was such a store anywhere. I believe to this hour that he had kept this secret in his head, never putting it to paper, and that it died with him. Men are men, born hazardous and foolish.

But back to Hispaniola we came, to Puerto Plata, and there, after selling the *Bel Esprit*, old Tributor honestly passed over Jane's share—which came to one hundred and fifty pounds—and so parted from us. I never saw this good man again, but afterwards heard that, having taken to piracy, he met his death somewhere in the Bahama Channel, cruising with that black robber Captain England. So easy it is to sink in this world, and so true—as

St. Paul says—that "evil communications corrupt good manners."

Being now safe ashore, and our honour safe, the first thing we did was to render thanks to God for delivering us out of so great perils; and, the next, we made a great mistake. For—Jane still passing as a young man, and Captain Sharp's son, and me for his wife or young woman (in a manner of speaking), and no lack of ready money for the present—it pleased us to buy a small cottage, five miles eastward of Puerto Plata, pretty solitary, at the head of a spit of sand overlooking the main anchorage, but hidden from the town by a bluff, where for six or seven weeks we played to be man and wife, while thinking out the best way to slip back to England and live respectable lives.

The easy way, of course, was to ship as passengers on some honest merchantman for Bristol or Liverpool: and this we meant to do. But the trouble was, Jane's recovering her money—that is to say, her husband's money, the price of the *Bel Esprit's* cargo — from the agent, a Frenchman called Grogniet. She had already missed the main of her fortune, poor soul, and 'twas unreasonable she should not make effort for this remainder,

which amounted to a clear five hundred pounds of our money.

Here came in her difficulty. She had visited Grogniet's office, two months before, in man's clothes along with Sharp, and Sharp had there passed her off as his son. Moreover, Grogniet, of course, knew of Sharp's death, the return of the expedition, and the sale of the ship; and in all this he had made no sign. How (we discussed) should she go to him and claim her money? If she went in her dress as Sharp's son, as Grogniet knew her, he would, like as not, demand sight of the will; and the will left this, with all other moneys, to Sharp's wife. On the other hand, if she went under true colours as a woman and Sharp's wife, there was no such woman known to Grogniet or to anyone on the island, and if Grogniet demanded proof and to be referred to England, it would certainly mean months of delay and perhaps reach a full stop on the question: How had the *Bel Esprit*, French schooner, of Havre, come with her cargo into Sharp's possession?

We talked this over many times, and at length it was resolved that Jane should go over to the port and present herself before the agent in the guise under which he knew her, as Sharp's son. If he made any

great demur, she was then to play her second card, exhibit the will, and confess herself for a woman, and Sharp's wife. If, after that, he should still play the rogue, she was to win him over by offering him a commission on the money, and so make the best terms she could. On this expedition, one morning, she left me.

Now I have told you that our cottage stood at the head of a sandy spit overlooking the main, or outer, anchorage, but shielded from view of the town. In this roadstead I noted, after Jane had left me, there was but one vessel lying, and she a small schooner of a hundred-and-fifty tons or less. I paid little heed to her, being busy with our pots and pans, taking them forth and scouring them bright with the sand. Next I fetched out a wash-tub and cleansed a dish-clout or two, afterwards rigging up a clothes-line and hanging them to dry in the strong sunshine. Now and again, to be sure, my thoughts ran on Jane and what weather she would be faring just now at Puerto Plata. But for a space my heart was light, after my heavy trouble, and from time to time I could almost fancy myself back at Watchet in Somerset, and at my old tasks at the inn; and I kept my back to the sea because, though more

beautiful, it was of a blue so much brighter than the sea off Watchet. But there is no need to tell you of my fancies, except that they were idle, and on that morning, years before I had any true conviction of sin, my heart went up to the Lord for my late deliverance, and seemed to sing for the wonderful things that happened in life. Before going into the house again I turned about, and there was a spark of light, flashing and glancing at me from the deck of the schooner. I set it down for the play of the sun on a brass gun such as most vessels carried in those parts, and most crews took a pride in polishing, as I had taken a pride in polishing my pans.

So I carried them into the cottage, and there rested—as the custom is on the islands—during the worst heat of the day. But pretty early in the afternoon I went out to fetch my dish-clouts off the line. And there was a gig making for shore from the schooner direct for the spit, with four men pulling and one standing up in the stern-sheets and steering. I could see, even at a distance, that he was very tall and powerful of build. I cannot tell at what point I wanted to run, nor, again, what held me from running. But I stood still as the boat grounded, and he leaped ashore and came tearing up the spit

to me like a man in a passion. He had pistols in his belt, but no weapon in his hands, and coming within ten paces of me—his men watching from the boat—he flung both hands wide.

"*Mademoiselle!*" he cried, and went on with a rush of words in French.

I was horribly frightened: but somehow I checked him and stammered back in English that I did not understand. If he had honest business, my husband, I said (meaning Jane), would be back before long, and would talk with him. Thereupon, Seraphim (I am telling it as a truthful woman), he shifted his language and began to storm at me in broken English.

"Your husband, where is he? I will kill him! I say, I have been watching you all this morning through my glass, and there is no woman else in the world for me. *Tiens!*" He spread out his huge arms. "My name is Bras-de-Fer—Alexandre Bras-de-Fer. I love you! You love me? No? But you shall! You are mine! Regard me, how strong I am! And where is this husband of yours?"

With that, as I stood staring at him, completely dazed—but, indeed, in my life I had never seen so

fine a figure of a man—I heard Jane's voice calling me within the cottage. She had returned by the back entrance.

The stranger's whole body stiffened of a sudden. His hand went to one of the pistols in his butt. Then Jane must have shown herself in the porch of the cottage, for he gave a sort of howl as I tried to bar his way to it.

"You mistake, sir," I cried to him, "I have no husband. We are but two women here, and helpless. If you will be merciful and go away——"

I cast back a look for Jane, who, sure enough, was standing stock-still in the porchway; and with that I fainted for the only time in my life.

I suppose that they must have come to some understanding amid the business of fetching me back to my senses, for I recovered them to hear his voice shouting, loud as ever:

"This Grogniet, madame—I will wring it out of him by the neck, to the last *écu!* I know this Grogniet, every hair on his skin. Will she be better now? Yes, she can be carried down to the boat. My men are waiting, and I am in a hurry. I am desolated to lay this labour upon you, madame, after a tiring day. But I will see this Grogniet, though I would fain

carry her, this my angel, my fate, to a priest first to unite us."

He lifted me in his great arms as one might catch up a parcel of down. I felt myself no heavier. The next thing I remember is sitting in the boat, revived by the wind playing in my hair, but whether it blew off-shore or came from the speed of the boat—for the crew rowed like four demons—I do not well remember. But Jane sat beside me, holding my hand, pressing it from time to time as if to ask in silence whether or not I was awake and protesting. I was awake, but somehow I could not protest.

This is all I shall write to you at present, Seraphim, concerning my marriage. But concerning this Alexandre Bras-de-Fer, my husband, it is due that I set down some particulars.

He was, to begin with, a Gascon of good—as he assured me, of noble—family. Nor was this hard to believe, for his good looks were no less remarkable than the vigour of his immense frame. This bodily strength of his had won him the surname Bras-de-Fer —in English, " Iron-arm." He was proud, having renounced his own family in a hot quarrel which had driven him to sea, to seek fortune in Hispaniola: and it was in this name that he married me, this

being in nowise contrary to the custom of the island. Indeed, all ceremonies and rites of marriage were in those days—God forgive the people!—rare on that island. But, as my story shows, his passion for me forbade him to stint me in any particular of honour, as in those parts it was understood.

Now I must tell you three things about this man, all of which came to my knowledge later and after I had become his wife. (1) He was an adventurer as famous as any in the islands. (2) Unlike the others, such as Montbars and Morgan and Sharp, he always cruised solitary, never with a fleet, for his cupidity would brook no sharing, and this infirmity—if you will call it so—no doubt had driven him to practise cruising alone, and, in the end, to take a fierce pride in an art—as he called it—wherein no man could touch him. And (3) his crews adored him and swore by him; and this not only because of his high carriage and good nature, but because there was no man with his reputation for taking a risk against odds, yet, if things went amiss, of thinking coolly and pulling them out of the fire. His schooner, I should add, was called the *Phœnix*, and it was said that she could be detected from many miles distance, being trimmed

and fitted, from her upper spaces to her running-gear, after his own notions. He never fretted to disguise her.

All this I learned later, bit by bit; as also that he never dealt treacherously, nor had been known to kill an enemy in cold blood. But for the time I was his bride, and happy; and he, with money in his pocket, in no haste to put to sea. Twenty minutes had sufficed him to deal with the agent Grogniet. Jane had her money duly handed over. At the end of a week we saw her off from the quay of Santo Domingo, cheerful and homeward-bound for Bristol on the *Orange* merchantman, and turned our horses back for the cottages on the far side of the island. I rode on a small mountain pony, but my husband on a tall horse, as stout almost as one of Mills's Brewery. Nothing less would have carried him.

At Jane's cottage—as I will call it—we abode for two months, and all the while in the roadstead the *Phœnix* rode to her moorings. But Alexandre had money in his pocket, and the crew understood, and took their pay and never grumbled. He put off to the ship every day. Usually I went with him, and always his men received me as a queen.

In the idle between-hours he had a great fancy

to teach me to swim. You will smile to think of your aunt thus employed ; but I was young in those days, scarcely more than a slip of a girl, and—to say it only for truth's sake—shapely of form and good looking beyond the common. It is certain, at any rate, that my husband found me so, for he doted on me. I was light-hearted, too—God forgive me!—and this present world seemed to hold all that my heart could desire, with little wanting even at the moment to content me, unless it might be that rope of pearls which Alexandre promised to hang about my neck within a month or two, before the end of our voyage. In time, the Lord chastening me, I was brought to see the vanity, and worse, of these lusts of the flesh ; yet many years were to pass before I came to the door of Salvation and knocked and it was opened.

I need not say that the crew kept their distance, aboard, when we went bathing. Alexandre could swim more powerfully than any negro—but this will have little meaning for you, who do not know the West Indies. For diving, only the pearl-fishing negroes, who made a trade of it, could beat him. He would dash out some way into the channel, beating the water with his legs to scare away the sharks, and shout to me as I practised close inshore—very timidly

at first, and with a spare paddle under my breast for support. But I was eager to deserve his praise, and also something-eager to prove to him that his English wife had the courage of her nation. Thus in about three weeks I had learnt very tolerably, and could swim by his side, lengthening our distance almost daily, though he was always solicitous and on the watch against tiring me. Then, arriving back to shore, we would stretch ourselves on the sand, and dispute whether 'twas my turn to be given a lesson in French or his to learn some English from me.

But a day came when, instead of stretching himself as usual, he sat upright, and looking at me very seriously, said :

" These lessons, *ma belle,* though delightful to us both, have been given with a purpose."

" As if," said I, " you could have hidden that from me, however hard you tried ! I am to share all your risks, and once at sea, that will be one of them."

He brooded on this for a moment, and I waited for his answer, with my eyes—as, shutting them now, I can remember—fixed upon the point of his great naked shoulder, where the brine was drying in a crust. I seemed to see a patch of it grow and spread in the pause before he spoke again.

"I have more than once doubted," said he, "if I have done wisely in teaching you to swim. If things go ill ——"

"They cannot go ill," I took him up, for again he had paused and seemed to be considering. "All the crew tell me ——"

"What? You have been talking with the crew?" He turned about and asked me this very fiercely. There was never such a man for jealousy.

"Never but by your side," said I; "or always when you were on deck and within hearing if you chose to hear. It was once when we visited the ship together. The crew say that, when the time comes, I need have no fear on board the *Phœnix*, for Captain Bras-de-Fer would get an upper-hold upon Satan himself."

He laughed at this, pleased as a child, but in a moment turned moody again.

"Well, the time is up, and we must sail to-morrow," he told me, "for my pockets are nigh empty. But I have been thinking, if things should go ill, by teaching you to keep afloat I 've but taught you to fall into another man's hands instead of drowning, and for me that would be double death," said Alexandre, grinding his teeth on the thought.

Upon this I made him a promise, and it has eased my conscience many a time to call back the very words as they came to me. "Alive," said I, "and until you cast me off, into no other man's hand will I ever fall, as God is my witness."

That evening he gave me a present—a small shagreen case and a pouch made of bladder-skin, the both in a bag of oiled silk with a thong whereby it could be slung and carried about the neck. The case contained a pistol no bigger than a toy and a dagger like a woman's bodkin, both of choice Spanish work; and the pouch, a handful of ammunition. At five the next afternoon we weighed anchor and headed out for the Windward Passage.

We carried a fair wind to the Island of St. Andrew; where, finding it unguarded—the Spaniards, who make it a base during the pearl-fishing, abandon it during other seasons—we put in and careened the ship, with whose sailing Alexandre was ill-content, the truth being that she had gathered weed during her long wait at anchor. This island lies off the bank of Rancheiras, near the River de la Plata—not the great river of that name—in 12 deg. and a half N. latitude; and to the bank of Rancheiras, which is richer in pearl than any other on the coast, the

Cartagena merchants sent twelve vessels yearly with a man-of-war for their defence. Each vessel carried two negroes or more, men so skilful at diving that they could fetch up pearls from the depth of six fathoms.

Now, although the season was near its close—as was shown by the Spaniards' withdrawal from the island—before scrubbing ship Alexandre had sent out the long boat, which came back with report that the pearl ships—the man-of-war, too—yet lingered off the banks; and by the settled weather he judged that they would linger for yet a week, to lose nothing of their harvest.

"The more they take, the richer we!" he promised. Then it was that he laid his plan before the crew.

Leaving twelve men with orders to have the *Phœnix* out and moored by sundown, with cable ready for slipping, he packed his remaining twenty in the long-boat and sailed boldly out for the banks. It pleased him when I begged to make one of the party.

"We must not be separated," said I, "for that went with my promise."

We came in sight of the pearl fleet a little before

nightfall. They rode at anchor, pretty close together ; the man-of-war scarcely half a league distant, and the wind very light. No sooner were they spied than my husband commanded to down sail and mast, and pull in for the loom of the land, his hope being either to creep up unobserved or, if observed, to pass for a Spanish coast-boat plying from Maracaibo. But, the darkness soon after falling, the man-of-war missed to challenge us.

By ten o'clock we were close upon the outermost ship, which carried a riding-light forward and another above her poop, so that there could be no missing. Alexandre left steering for a while and went forward among the men. There was whispering for a few minutes. When he returned aft to me he held an auger in his hand.

"Courage, *ma belle!*" he said, low in my ear, and kissed the tip of it lightly. Then, as we fell alongside, almost in the ship's shadow, he bent down in the stern-sheets, and began to work vigorously.

I understood. He was scuttling the boat under us, that there might be no retreat.

I should tell you that, by Alexandre's orders, none of us wore shoes. As the water poured in, cold and

swirling about my naked feet, I heard a soft shuffling forward, and saw our fellows there leaping, one by one, for the Spaniard, and climbing up her side like cats. I cannot now tell if 'twas the new-risen moon or the ship's riding light that showed me their cutlasses glinting, gripped between their teeth. While I stared at them Alexandre caught me hard by the elbow and hurried me towards the bows. Just as we reached the forward thwart the boat went under, and I was in the water, swimming all of a sudden, and struggling to grip the vessel's side. But Alexandre had made a spring for the chains and clung there. He lowered a naked leg, I caught it around the ankle, and, with a laugh and a heave of his knee, he lifted me light as a feather and caught me under the armpit.

"Courage, *ma belle!*" he whispered again; and we clambered up the chains and over the bulwarks together.

All this while my ears were expecting the noise of musket-shots, or, at least, of a furious grapple. But the success of our attack had lain in its swiftness and silence. Almost we might have come aboard as passengers, the Spaniards' deck was so quiet. In his cabin the captain and chief officers had been

taken at a game of cards. The captain, a foolish fat man, had been playing—for what reason I cannot guess—with his gold watch on the table beside him, and, on being surprised, he had caught it up and—again I cannot guess why—was attempting to swallow it. There, at any rate, he stood, with the cards scattered on the table before him and the watch-chain dangling from his mouth, while two of our men held their pistols close to his waistcoat.

Alexandre laughed aloud for the first time, stepped forward, and drew the watch from his mouth with a jerk.

"Capitano," said he, gravely examining it, "you seem to make the time a quarter past ten, and by my own timepiece I have come five minutes too early. This you will forgive, since time presses with me. I have a man forward filing through your anchor chain; but, if you are wise, you will save him trouble and slip it. The ship is ours, I believe? As I came along I took care to see my fellows in possession of the gun-room."

"Jesu!" stammered the captain. "Are these devils, or what are they?"

"You cannot," said Alexandre gravely—"you

a Spaniard, cannot be so polite as to suspect it when I here present you to my wife, Madame Bras-de-Fer. And, by the way, captain, I have promised her a rope of your pearls. As a gallant man you will do her the courtesy to order up a basket of your very best."

IV

THE "RUNNING AMBUSH"

At the next meeting Ann Bonney—as I may put it—set the wheel going that spun the yarn.

"'Tis a wonderful thought to me," she said, leaning back a little in her chair as the drink warmed her, "that after what we've seen, not to mention what we've been through, we should be sitting cosy here over the drink, three respectable widow-women." Here she pulled herself up sharply. "I ask your pardon, Trinidad; maybe I oughtn' to have blabbed."

"It don't matter," said my aunt, with a glance at me. "Seph knows."

"I'm glad you've told him." Mrs. Bonney, much relieved, treated me to a broad smile. "Then, maybe," she added, "you've also told him what you've never yet told me, and that is the reason you go about calling yourself Miss Trudgian."

"I don't want to talk about it," my aunt replied,

after a pause, and her voice was very quiet. "But there 's no mystery. My husband was a Frenchman ——"

"And captained the *Running Ambush*. So much I knew."

"His Christian name was Alexandre. We 'll call it Alender. His true surname he never told to me or to anyone. As Alexandre Bras-de-Fer he married me, which is a nickname, and means 'Iron Arm' in English. He went by no other on the islands, and I never found out for years—and then only by a chance word—that 'twasn't the one he was born with. It did well enough for wedding in Hispaniola, and if you go there, to Port de Paix, you can read my marriage lines; but I doubt that 'twould hold by English law. So now you have the tale, and the reason for it and all."

"A bold fellow, too, by all accounts."

"Oh! if you come to that," said my aunt, "I don't mind talking! You spoke of the *Running Ambush* just now. Maybe you 'd like to hear how he came by the ship, and how she came by her name?"

And this was my Aunt Trinidad's story.—

The first ship I sailed in with my husband, Alexandre Bras-de-Fer, was a small schooner, the *Phœnix*. He had owned her for five or six years, and you may say that the fear of her ran from Hispaniola to the River Plate.

On the cruise of which I am telling we weighed from Port de Paix and held a fair wind to the small island of St. Andrew, off the Rancheria banks. These banks, as I dare say you know, are the richest along the Main for the pearl fishery, and every year the Carthagena merchants used to send a fishing fleet of twelve vessels, with a man-of-war to guard them—an armadilla (as its name was) with two hundred for crew and twenty-four pieces of cannon.

Alexandre left the *Phœnix* well-sheltered in an anchorage at the back of the island, near her southernmost point, putting the boatswain in charge, with orders to weigh early and keep her jigging back and forth under cover of the point. He himself took the long-boat, with twenty men, and started in search of the fishing fleet. I sailed with him. We spied it a little before sunset. The smaller vessels rode at anchor, pretty close to the land, by the entrance of a broad river, with the ship-of-war at a league's distance. At once Alexandre gave the order

to down sail and wait for nightfall. Then, creeping upon the nearest of the fleet in the darkness—which proved to be the vice-admiral, with eight guns and a crew of sixty—boldly ran alongside and sent his men swarming up and over her bulwarks. At the same time, to encourage them, as he said—that is, to convince them they must win the ship or be lost—he scuttled the long-boat under their feet. She sank almost before the last of us were aboard.

But the Spaniards had been keeping poor watch, and our men swept along their deck with never a shot fired. The officers, who should have given orders, were all below at cards with their captain, and Alexandre, heading the rush down the ladder, burst the cabin door open and clapped his pistol at the captain's chest as he sprang up from his play.

"Let me present you to my wife, capitano," said Alexandre, laughing. "Why are we here? We are here because she is capricious, and has taken a sudden fancy to possess a rope of pearls. As a gallant man you will do her the courtesy to order up a basket of your very best."

Thus, against all expectation and almost in silence, we had mastered one of the Spanish pearl-ships. But we still had the remaining eleven vessels of the

flotilla at anchor close about us, not to speak of the man-of-war about a league away ; so that our peril was yet extreme, and if an alarm should be raised, we were certainly lost.

But if any doubt such as I felt, and could not dismiss, ever crossed the minds of our crew, those in the cabin around us gave no sign of it, but kept their eyes on Alexandre, while Alexandre kept his pistol at the Spanish captain's chest. Someone had been prompt and fetched a great bag of pearls, and, opening the neck of it, had let a score or so roll out on the table. But my eyes were for Alexandre, and for him only. And the men on deck must have stood steady at their posts, for not a sound came down to us. Alexandre glanced merrily at me, and then said he, lifting the pistol point-blank to the Spaniard's face :

" Capitano, I regret to hold you in a posture which must be full of discomfort ; but it is necessary, and your men can shorten the trial for you by helping my scoundrels with the best of their speed. As I came along the deck just now, I took note that you had lifted your boats inboard for the night. You carry three, hey ? I have always admired—but, up to now, from a distance—the boats you carry, you and your

consorts, on the pearl fishing. They have a pretty entry for speed, their shear takes the eye, and, what is better, they float a good burden aft. Some clever fellow along your coast must have thought out the design, and I have often coveted one for a model. But first, with your leave, we will order all three to be launched, that I may satisfy myself with a closer trial. You and I will take a trip together in one, and our full crews shall go with us to point out any defect we may miss. Moreover, we will test their build aft with a sufficiency of dead freight."

The poor Spaniard could only make signs that he consented. To be short, in half an hour or so the three boats were launched, and two of them packed with pearls to the value—as Alexandre reckoned—of seventy thousand pieces-of-eight. Nor did he forget to add a quantity of provisions, with two or three dozen bottles of Spanish wine, and some barrels of gunpowder, concerning which I shall have more to tell. Thus, having distributed our men and the Spaniards pretty evenly for crews—the Spaniards unarmed, of course—we pushed off in the darkness, and started to row with all speed back for the Island of St. Andrew, behind the south point of which, as

I have told you, the *Phœnix* would be lying at anchor.

The air holding light, with scarce a swell on the sea, we made good progress, and a little before daybreak caught the loom of the island. Alexandre judged that the wind would freshen a little at sunrise, and compassionating the Spanish captain, who had taken his reverse of fortune with good sense and good temper, thus addressed him :

" Capitano," he said, " the lights in your fleet were steady, I observed, up to the moment when we lost the last of them. We are now within fair reach of my ship, and I see no reason to inflict on you, who have put so good a face on misfortune, an overlong passage back to your craft, or to fatigue your men who have copied their commander's philosophy. As it is, they will have to pull against a head wind. I think the moment has come when I can safely transfer you and all of them to your third boat and part company, wishing you better luck next time."

He blew on his whistle the signal for the other two boats to range up alongside. They did so, and the crews were sorted out and transhipped with tolerable speed. We had even come to the point of bidding the Spaniards a prosperous journey back, when the day

broke and brought us a most disquieting surprise. The island lay something under half a league on our lee, and at scarce that distance to windward was a galley, such as the Spanish men-o'-war carry, heading down on us under sail. As the sun rose, moreover, its rays showed us that she carried a gun in her bows—a small brass chaser.

It appeared afterwards, on the confession of two of our crew, that in the confusion of boarding they had seen one of the Spaniards slip overboard by the chains on the further side; but they had not troubled to report this because, in their estimate, no Spaniard could swim the distance to the nearest ship, and they concluded that either, hearing no noise or outcries of assault, he had slipped back on board or had certainly been drowned.

"As you certainly deserve to be hanged!" Alexandre swore at them. "That man was no Spaniard, but one of their black divers. These fellows can swim for leagues at a pinch, and from a word the captain let fall, I believe he had three divers on board."

We could never be sure of what had happened; but I believe that Alexandre's guess was the true one; that this man had swum his way to the nearest

pearl-boat ; that its captain, hearing the news but being without any information of our strength, had sent off a boat to warn the man-o'-war, and for the rest had been content to put himself in posture of defence. Also, it may be, he sent warning to others of the fleet ; but the silence on board the vessel we had taken held them all irresolute, if not in doubt that the alarm was a false one, depending on the word of a negro only.

Alexandre argued further that the captain of the man-o'-war, judging that she could make but slow way in the light air then blowing, had launched this galley ; which, after visiting our prize, and finding her robbed and abandoned, had pushed on in search of the robbers at haphazard.

All this, however, is guesswork. However she had come, there for certainty was the galley closing down on us.

Now, had it been but a question of making the nearest point of the island and saving ourselves ashore, we had the odds in our favour, though but slightly. We could not hope, however, to unload our spoil before the galley brought her gun to bear on us ; we should have the breadth of the island to traverse before reaching the *Phœnix* at her anchorage ;

and (worst of all) before we could reach her and slip off with sea room, the man-o'-war would assuredly use the morning wind to run down and take us in a trap. In a moment Alexandre resolved to accept the greater present risk—he put down his helm, and, bringing our boat up to a beam wind, headed her for the south point of the island, around which lay our only salvation.

Many of the crew in our boat exchanged looks and murmured, but no one was bold enough to mutiny. In the other boat, they seemed of two minds for a while, for she yawed a full two minutes before hauling up and following our lead, and scarcely had she made up her mind before fortune and misfortune fell upon us at a stroke. The galley let off her gun to summon us.

It was a wild discharge, nothing near within range. But the gun was shotted, and the shot fell pretty close to the boat that contained our cast-off Spaniards—close enough to raise a wave; and she, being laden with men almost gunwale-deep, took the water over her stern and went down like a stone. Up then ran the galley, and finding the swimmers—or all that remained—to be Spaniards, stayed to rescue them. Our other boat changed her helm and made for the

near shore in a panic, despite the calls Alexandre blew on his whistle. What happened to her crew I know not ; we never saw a man of them again.

We, holding south for the point—with so much time gained—were debating whether the galley would choose to hunt these fools or to follow us, when Alexandre gave a sudden shout and pointed. And over the southernmost spit I saw the top sails of the *Phœnix* hauled on a wind, and feeling her way out for an offing to seek how we fared. Lord, how I blessed old Smitham, her boatswain ! And Alexandre blessed him, too. In less than an hour we were aboard of her, and trimming sail to run south. About midday the sails of the Spanish man-o'-war showed up in chase. But we lost her at sundown, and as for the galley, she must have gone in chase of the other boat. I cannot (as I say) tell how that chase ended.

All the night we ran before a fair breeze, and at dawn, scanning the sea, Alexandre knew himself out of danger. He had heaved the pearl-boat in-board, and stowed her cargo—pearls enough to bathe my two hands in, and wine, in which he pledged me while I did so, calling me his queen and his bringer of luck. The fresh powder—our own magazine being full—he had put away in the lazarette. So we sailed

for five days, rejoicing in our fortune, with little to do but keep look-out.

But on the sixth day, almost without time to down sails, we ran into a storm of thunder and lightning. I have never seen its like. We had been running for eight or nine hours pretty close to a coast, plain to see on our starboard, when up from the eastward there drew a black cloud with two water-spouts hissing under it, and making (as it seemed) straight for us. You may guess I had never seen a water-spout before, and, indeed, not many of our crew had met one at close quarters. But Alexandre, after a word with the boatswain, gave orders to unstrip the bow-chaser that was kept always loaded under cover of tarpaulins.

"Smitham," he called to the boatswain, "who is our best gunner aboard?"

"Dick Davis, sir, is our second best," answered Smitham, "and after Dick, I come third, though by a long way. The rest are no account."

This pleased Alexandre hugely, even in our moment of great peril.

"Ah!" said he. "So in this, too, I come first, do I? and must get you clear of this mess, as of others? Well, I'll ask you to remember it, and

remind the first man that ever shows signs of mutiny. Is there time to draw the charge and reload ? "

" I think not, sir," answered Smitham, with a glance at the two spouts, now rushing close down on us.

The man's teeth were chattering.

In those days (as I have told you) I had no convictions of sin, or I should have read God's judgment straight descending upon us. It even took me some time, in my ignorance, to understand the peril.

" A water-spout," thought I, watching the two columns as they came along, " is only water, after all. If one of them hits us, we shall get a bad drenching."

They came along very prettily, in shape like a pair of hour-glasses, slim in the waist and long drawn out, reaching up from the sea to a dark, low-lying cloud in which their tops melted, and when we first sighted them they made a pleasant humming sound as they travelled.

I was wondering at the fright written on old Smitham's face, when this humming swelled up to a roar as of a hundred mad bulls. As it swelled, I heard another noise, like the banging of guns, just overhead. It came from the canvas flapping as the boatswain,

who had taken over the helm, jammed the schooner up in the wind, as well to lay her stem-on to the danger as to give Alexandre a level deck for laying his gun.

Alexandre turned to me with the burning match in his right hand, and blew me a kiss with his left. Had he shouted, I could not have heard him, for just then the first water-spout went howling by some fifty or sixty yards to larboard. The second was heading straight for our bows, and was almost on top of us, when I saw the flash of the gun and felt the deck shake under my feet. As for the report, I scarcely heard it in the uproar all around.

But the shot was worthy of Alexandre. The ball cut clean through the waist of the spout at its thinnest, as you might snap the stem of a wineglass, and in a moment the upper half of the column was tumbling. I saw it, but had no time to see more; for, carried forward by its past speed, it crashed upon us with a weight of water that not only laid me flat but almost beat the last breath out of my body. When I came to myself I was swimming—swimming. Yes, actually on the schooner's deck, and in a glare that seemed to burst in zigzags from all points of the sky. It was the lightning.

In the glare I caught sight of Alexandre wading towards me thigh-deep. He reached me, gave me his strong hand, and pulled me to my feet. Until I saw him wading, I fully believed that the ship had gone down under us, and that I was struggling in the sea.

His mouth was open; he was shouting close by my ear. Still, in the noise of the thunder, I could distinguish no word that he said. But he gripped my shoulder with one hand and with the other pointed aloft. The main topmast was gone—whether by stroke of lightning or broken under the weight of water, there 's no saying; but it was gone, and the whole of the foremast leaned at a crazy angle.

It was at this mast that he pointed. By and by I heard his voice. "I doubt she 's sinking forward. We must get out the boats, if there 's a boat left. The scuppers will clear her in a minute."

Sure enough the water in which we stood was ebbing away fast, and then, almost (as it seemed) in a minute the storm was rolling away to leeward. We were in sunshine again, and the crew came tumbling forward at Alexandre's call to work the forward

pump. For in this short space of time our preservation had been no less wonderful than our disaster. Not a man of the crew had been lost, or even badly injured; not one washed overboard, not one broken in body by the falling gear. As for the disaster—that is to say, as we made it out—the foremast, wrenching wide the deck-seams, had opened a sort of race between water and lightning for the powder stowed in the lazarette. The water (so Alexandre declared) had a good start, for which we should thank Heaven; but the lightning had overtaken it in time to explode one of the kegs.

What kind of leak this had opened we had no means to discover, both lazarette and forehold being deep in water. The wonder was it had not blown her bows right out. For a while the men at the pumps seemed, at least, to be holding their own, and, the rest of the crew working with a will, Alexandre half-hoisted the mainsail, and contrived to get way on and work her about with her nose pointing for shore—no easy matter with a craft so badly down by the head. He kept the men at the pumps on short shifts, relieving each gang as it gave signs of distress. I have never seen men work more furiously. Also, he had the boats examined. One

was little better than match-wood, and the weight of water had stove in all but the long-boat, which Smitham reported to be staunch and serviceable.

We carried a light breeze on our beam, and Alexandre's plan was evident—to nurse the *Phœnix* to land, now well in sight, on the chance of running upon some creek or anchorage, and the unlikelier chance of finding it uninhabited. For all this coast belonged—in name, at least—to the Spaniards.

The sea had subsided marvellously in the wake of the storm, and was now so smooth that even in the long-boat we had a good chance for shore.

"We shall do it, *ma belle*," Alexandre assured me: "though to steer her is like driving an ape by the tail."

We were, indeed, closing down on a shore which seemed at first to be that of the Main; but Alexandre, with his cunning sight, announced it to be an island —one of the broken group that, almost overlapping, made to the eye against the sunset a single coastline.

"An island," said he, "and so much the better. The less chance to find inhabitants."

"The worst chance," said Smitham the boatswain, "if, as I guess, we are off the Boca de Drago. Every island hereabouts is inhabited."

"Not by Spaniards?"

"By worse."

"I have heard," said Alexandre, frowning, "the powder in the afterhold is dry yet. Have it brought up, and the muskets served out. We will feel our way in."

It was Smitham who wrecked the ship. As we drew within a mile of the island the wind shifted. A land breeze came off and headed us, and I mind as I write this the warm scent it blew from shore, like a puff in our faces from a perfumer's shop. Because it headed us, Smitham rigged up a small foresail to fetch her about when she tacked, and this was our undoing; for the wind it held, though small, proved too much for our leaning foremast, which presently came down with a crash, breaking whole yards of the bulwarks to splinters and tearing up the deck in a great yawning hole.

Far worse than this, her foot—down in the hold—must have ripped yet wider the wound through which we were taking the water. For the men, who had run forward to cut away the raffle, of a sudden cried out that the ship was going down under them by the head. And a moment later the pump-hands dropped their work and were scurrying aft, exclaiming that all was over.

Alexandre saw that it was indeed so, and in the few minutes left to us very briskly—and yet coolly—got out the long-boat, in which he had already in precaution stowed the muskets, with a good quantity of powder and ball, and some casks of provisions. Nor had he forgotten the sacks of pearls. Even when we had the boat launched and alongside, and had taken our seats in her, he ran back for yet another barrel of powder.

This nearly cost him his life: for he had scarcely reached the deck again, bearing the barrel, when the *Phœnix* plunged forward and went down under his feet. He dropped the barrel, sprang to the rail as it went awash, gave a loud, cheerful shout, and swam for us, who had been forced to push off a little way.

But as he swam close, the men in the long-boat raised an outcry that she, too, was going down, that she was leaking like a basket.

"Fools!" shouted Alexandre. "It 's between her topstrakes the leak is. I misdoubted they had been knocked open. Her lower strakes are sound, I 'll swear. Dump out and lighten her, you that can swim. And quick, too, before the powder gets spoilt! Boatswain, hitch a rope to the ringbolt and

pay it out, that the weak swimmers can take hold and be towed."

I am somewhat proud to this hour, Seraphim, that I was the first to obey him; for, seeing me take to the water, the men—that is, the swimmers amongst them—could not for shame hang back.

"Bravo, *ma belle!*" shouted Alexandre. "And you shall live to tell how, like a good captain, I was the last to leave the ship."

By and by Smitham called astern to us from the boat that she had ceased to leak; that all the water had come in by the two top seams. No great damage, he thought, had been done to the powder. He baled, and his crew rowed, while we swam in their wake. Four or five of the men tailed on at the stern-rope; but for me, I was never happier than then, breasting towards the near land through the calm sea beside Alexandre. A swimmer on my left grunted that he had as lief be eaten now by a shark as reach the land with so much pain to be eaten by worse.

"Worse?" I asked.

"Cannibals," said he.

We came to shore a little before nightfall with not a man lost, and, as it proved, very little damage either to powder or provisions. Alexandre frowned

when I asked him if indeed the Indians upon these islands were cannibals.

"They have the name of it," he owned. "But I have a mind to hang that fellow for telling you."

"Why should I not know all our danger?" I asked him. "Have I by chance failed you in courage at any point? And, besides, is it so much worse to be eaten by a man than by a shark?"

He grimaced at this.

"I would not choose either," said he, "for the sepulchre of my beloved." And with that he laughed happily, and added: "But we are safe enough for the time. There may be no inhabitants at all on this island, and, anyhow, we have saved our muskets, whereas the Indians on this coast use nothing better than arrows. To-morrow I will explore the hill at the back of us, and set a watch station. If necessary, we will also put up a stockade. To-night it is too late to search if there be any tracks leading inland."

We talked thus in the dark at some distance from the rest of the crew, as we put off our few wet clothes. We had reached shore by the mouth of a small creek where the forest came down to the water's edge,

and under the tangle of trees we found abundance of last year's leaves to make coverlets for us, warm and dry.

The next day, while Alexandre with three others explored the hill, Smitham took a crew out to salve any wreckage there might be floating; less in hope to find anything useful than to fetch ashore, sink, or destroy any evidence that, drifting along the coast, might bring the Indians on our track.

They found nothing of value or of consequence. And the next day—Alexandre having fixed his signal-station, and sent up a party to clear the woods about it—was spent by some in repairing the boat, and by others in reconnoitring.

The old hands of our party, sniffing the scent of fruit and flowers borne down the gully where the creek ended, swore it to be a sign of good water, and not far away. For half a mile up the water was brackish, then almost suddenly it grew cleaner to the taste, and a short space above this we came on the prettiest of waterfalls, with a basin of rock below it, and a plot of turf surrounding the basin To this we removed our encampment, after staunching the boat and laying her up in the wood under a thick covering of leaves.

During those days the men were merry, and the merrier as, finding no traces of the Indians, they forgot to dread them. They were here, marvellously rescued to a man. They had plenty to eat, apart from the fruit the forest yielded. When the meat-casks failed, they would take to gunning, and, sooner or later, their captain would find a way to fetch all home to Hispaniola.

They grumbled a little that he obliged them, following up the inland track, to keep at work in the cool hours cutting holes through the undergrowth. They saw no reason for this. Alexandre said it was good for their health. In this happy time he, in general the happiest of men, was the only one to go about with a frown. But, of course, he had to get us away, sooner or later, and that was none so easy to plan.

We were, by half a dozen, too many to attempt a long voyage in the boat. Every near island was either thick with Indians or patrolled by Spaniards, and the near Main peopled with Spaniards, who would hang us without mercy. Kid or Avery, in his place, would have made little trouble over getting away with a crew of his choice, giving slip to the remainder; but Alexandre Bras-de-Fer belonged to the old breed

of adventurers. He had his faults—God forgive him!—but they were different.

Among the odds-and-ends salved from the *Phœnix* there happened to be a pack of cards, and I well remember—it was the eleventh morning after our landing—how two of the crew sat squatting at a game with these cards, with a party behind each, watching, smoking tobacco, and laying wagers, when Pierre Lemione, one of the sentinels on the hill, came running down with news of a vessel standing in for the island. We all climbed to the signal post, and sure enough, in the offing was a sail; which Alexandre, using his glass, at once declared to be a brig, a merchantman, and, moreover, a Spaniard.

"A vessel of that size will carry good arms, too," said he, like a man thinking aloud.

We watched her for a long while, the men chattering and speculating.

"Why should she be standing in for our island?" was, of course, the main question.

"And that is easily answered," said Alexandre. "She knows of good water here: or, if she doesn't, the scent of these woods and flowers will carry for two leagues as the wind now sets. She is putting in to fill her casks."

He had scarcely spoken when, as if to give him the lie, the brig shot out a puff of smoke, and we heard the sound of a gun.

At once the men clamoured that the Spaniard, having somehow got wind of our shipwreck following the pearl robbery, was bearing down to capture us.

"Fools!" said Alexandre. "If that were so, would she warn us to take hiding? That gun can only be a warning of some sort, seeing that she is not yet within twice the range of shore."

"But whom can she be warning?" they asked.

"I will tell you as soon as I know," he answered. "But, meanwhile, let us go down, all of us, to the hollow and remove all trace of our encampment. Two things are lucky, at any rate—the first, that I have not allowed you to light a fire, but kept you on fruit and powdered boucan, for all your grumbling; the second, that we brought no boots ashore. If they land where we landed—and faith, it looks as if they mean to—they can hardly miss our footprints on the sands and in the plashets, yet will take them for Indians', unless they happen to be clever beyond the ordinary. No," he added, "three things are lucky, and this third is that I made you cut those loop-holes along the track."

So down we hurried to the camp below the waterfall, and, while we were yet busy there, we heard the brig's anchor dropped. Some while later a sentry came running with news that two boats were being lowered from her, and soon another brought word that they were landing a company of forty men, all well armed.

"That settles it!" said Alexandre, and gave the word to scatter in two parties along the woods on either side of the defile.

I need not say that by this time every musket was loaded, and every pouch filled with ammunition. But he charged every man, upon pain of death, not to fire a shot, however tempted, until he blew a certain call on his captain's whistle. So, having hidden the last of our stores, we crept away shoreward in the thick cover.

The Spaniards came up the defile in good order and with caution. Their captain marched at their head, his best soldiers close behind. Crouching by Alexandre, behind one of the loop-holes, I saw them go by in single file. Alexandre gave no signal. When all had passed, he picked up his musket and followed, stealing swiftly to the second loop-hole, and the men, to whom for a week he had been teaching

this movement—though the most of them had learnt to stalk game on Hispaniola—moved alongside with scarcely the snap of a twig. As the soldiers moved, so the ambush ran, until we were back again by the plat and the pool under the waterfall.

Here the Spanish captain seemed to grow suspicious. He put up his head as one sniffing the air, halted his company, and in a low voice gave them some directions. They scattered and began to hunt the turf like hounds.

Of a sudden one of the soldiers gave a low cry. He was kneeling by the stream where it issued from the pool; and had come upon a footprint in the soft sand. His back was turned to me. A moment later he screamed and fell forward on his face, and I still stared—at his back, and at a long arrow that stuck in it, quivering yet.

Alexandre gripped my arm, and I heard his voice in my ear.

"Indians!" he whispered. "Indians above the fall! I was a fool not to have guessed. With luck, *ma belle,* we shall yet have the Spaniards' ship!"

Aunt Trinidad fell into a long silence, as though she had reached the end of her story.

"But did you take the ship?" asked Ann Bonney.

"Of course they did!" snapped Mrs. Raidlaw. "Isn't that what the story's about? And didn't this Alexandre rechristen her the *Running Ambush?*"

"Then I'm blest if I see——" Ann Bonney began; but my aunt cut her short.

I was wondering if you could guess how we managed it. Yet 'twas in the simplest way—one of the simple ways it takes a born captain to discover. You see, the Indians above the fall had the Spaniards at a stand and all exposed in the clearing, and within two minutes their arrows had accounted for nine or ten. 'Twas a choice of carrying the rocks by assault, or retreating or scattering for shelter in the undergrowth where—but, to be sure, they didn't know this—they would have run upon the muzzles of our muskets. Their leader, being a fellow of pluck, waved his hat as a signal for a volley, and made a dash for the rocks. Through the smoke I saw his hand drop as he waved, and later on we found the hat with an arrow stuck through it and the brim stained with blood. But he climbed, and his men followed. There was much reloading and firing on the way, and more again at the top. But the assault

carried it, and by and by we heard the shooting pass further and further away as the Indians broke and the soldiers pursued.

Then, with all clear, Alexandre crept out among the dead and wounded—and the wounded were as good as dead, the arrows being poisoned ones—and called the boatswain's party to join his own. He was in a towering rage. "One of your men fired without orders!" he swore, almost leaping on Smitham. "Who was it?" "I'll tell no lie," answered Smitham. "I fired the shot myself, and, what's more, it did for that fellow yonder." "If you couldn't navigate," said Alexandre, "I'd hang you within this hour at the Spaniard's yard-arm. You fool! If it hadn't been for the general flurry, you would have spoilt everything. Luckily you had to deal with a bigger blockhead than yourself—a blockhead who leaves his boat unguarded. Now, scatter all, and strip these bodies. When you've stripped 'em, tumble into their clothes, and let everyone who can't find a body to strip, strip his own, daub it over with earth, and make himself as near like an Indian as possible. Collect all the arrows, too. And as for you, *ma belle*, I won't ask you to strip to the waist; but if you can contrive to pass for an Indian princess, with a

skewer in your hair, and your throat showing, and a rope of pearls, and this Spanish coat to cover your shoulders ——"

That was how Alexandre contrived it. He himself took the Spanish captain's hat—with the hole in it—and pulled it well over his eyes. The men did the same with theirs. With shouldered arms, imitating the Spanish way of marching, and shouting '*Vittoria! Vittoria!*' they marched down to the shore, launched the Spaniards' boat, and pulled straight for the ship, Alexandre steering, and waving a sheaf of arrows. I made a passable captive, too, seated in the stern-sheets beside him.

The guards on board, as our men swarmed up by the main chains, received them, as you might say, with open arms. They were a very few—just the sailors and half a dozen marines. You could not call it a struggle. In three minutes the ship was ours; within twenty we were weighing, with her lower sails hoisted.

Next day, being well out of sight of the island, Alexandre examined his prize. She carried a mixed cargo—church furniture, tobacco, linen, silk, cocoa, with some chests of money—for the soldiers' pay. He reckoned the total worth at sixty thousand

crowns. At the final division, at Port de Paix, there was not a man that pocketed less than one hundred pieces of eight, and I had my pearls. The vessel was called the *Cristofero*, but Alexandre renamed her the *Running Ambush*, after our adventure, and in English, to do me honour.

V

THE UNFORTUNATE HARRY GLASBY

THIS was Ann Bonney's story; and she told it, with many gross chuckles, across my Aunt Hannah's round table and beside the bowl of bishop, now and again taking her pipe from her mouth, borrowing Mrs. Raidlaw's, and laying the pair on the mahogany, where, by a crook of her finger, they were moved to indicate a point of sailing or the positions of two vessels in a naval encounter.

It 's better to be born lucky, they say (Mrs. Bonney began), than a rich man's son; and contrariwise—though I 've never heard it put into a proverb—there be men no amount of virtuous inclinations can keep out of trouble, they happening to be ordained unfortunate.

Such a man was Harry Glasby, born in this city, of pious parents that none could challenge, nor wanted to; his father being a maker of optical instruments by the quayside here, and his mother a

Quakeress. On Sundays she went to her own place of worship, and her man to blow the bellows for the great organ in St. Mary's Redcliff. This never gave rise to any shadow of unpleasantness between them; and when the boy—their only boy—grew to ten or eleven years of age, his mother made no objection to his singing in the choir at St. Mary's.

The child, though mean-looking—his parents had married late, and he was never more than a fraction of a man—had a passable voice till it cracked, and this put him in the way of learning music. By the time he was sixteen or seventeen, he could play indifferent-like upon any instrument as it came along; and if you chose to discover a new one, he 'd catch up on that. He had a knack with the carpentry, too. At fifteen he 'd patched up a fiddle of his own making. And his father, that was proud of him, used to show it about and say: "You 'd hardly believe it, but my son Harry made this out of his own head."

'Twas the father's vanity and boastfulness of this child of his old age that set the ill-luck going for the poor lad. One day there came into the shop a seafaring man with a square box under his arm, and in the box a compass with its glass broken and a card that had been turned to a pulp by salt water. I

forget the man's name, if ever I heard it; but he said he was mate of the *Good Intent* snow, then lying by one of the lower wharves, and almost ready for sea. The compass, he said, was his master's cabin compass, that had met with mishap through being fetched on deck to do duty in the middle of a gale, the ship's binnacle having knocked loose in her fastenings, and could Mr. Glasby fix a new card and glass, and have her ready by eight o'clock at the latest? The old man put on his spectacles and started to explore the damage, and, meantime, his customer poked round the shop, taking an interest in its odds and ends.

"Hallo!" says he of a sudden. "You 've got a fiddle here. Play it?"

"My son Harry plays a little," says Mr. Glasby. "The fiddle belongs to him, and perhaps you 'll be surprised when I tell you that he made it out of his own head."

"I should like to see that child," says the seaman. "He must be a masterpiece."

"He is," says Mr. Glasby, "and I 'd like you to make his acquaintance. But you can't, just now, for he 's bound apprentice to a printer, down by the quay, and he won't be leaving work before seven o'clock."

"What!" says the seaman. "Can he make books as well as fiddles?"

"And that isn't the end of it, either," goes on old Glasby, prouder and prouder. "He can take a clock to pieces and put it together again, and—you see that framed chart, yonder, by the wall? Well, our Harry, as we call him, drew that out with his own hands, and took all the measurements to scale. Beautiful penmanship, hey?"

The seaman agreed that it was beautiful penmanship, but said he didn't hold with the drawings of sea-serpents and such-like that the boy had put in, here and there, all around the coast.

"For," said he, "if a tearing great fish, like I see here, was to poke up his head at me off Hartland Point, I'd take my kit ashore at the first port we made, and live a landsman the rest of my days."

"He put them in for ornament," says Mr. Glasby, "not meaning to mislead. The lad, I should tell you, knows a lot about the sea, and there was a time when he set his heart on being a sailor. His mother wouldn't hear of it, and so the matter dropped; but not before he taught himself navigation—yes, navigation! Our Harry, my dear sir, will take

you a ship slap round the world as bold as Francis Drake—on paper, if you understand me."

"Send I may never!" cries the mate. "And to think I got to sail without the pleasure of shaking hands with this bonus. Why, sir, it makes my heart bleed!"

"You needn't," says the old fool, beaming all over his face and important as a hen with one chick. "I 'll have your compass cleaned and repaired by seven o'clock this evening, and Harry shall take it down to the ship. There you can make his acquaintance, and you 'll find I haven't been boasting."

The mate was delighted.

"First-rate!" says he. And then says he, with a bright thought: "Tell him to bring along his fiddle as well."

By a quarter to eight that evening young Harry Glasby was down by the lower wharves hailing the *Good Intent*. He had the compass under one arm, and the fiddle-case in his other hand. Sure enough, the mate was ready for him, and made him welcome aboard. Down they went to the captain's cabin, and the captain, who was from Scotland, made great admiration over the fiddle.

"But I doubt," said he, "that you leave the playing of it to others?"

"Not at all," says Harry, thumbing his bow. "What would you like, sir? 'Greensleeves,' or 'Lillibullero'?"

They allowed they would like both. So he played them "Greensleeves" and "Lillibullero." And then, taking encouragement, he gave them "Since First I Saw Your Face," holding the fiddle against his stomach, and scraping out the tune while he sang the words. The master was delighted.

"And what 's more," says he, "my mate tells me you can navigate a ship almost as well as you play the fiddle."

As to that, young Glasby was more modest, but owned that if they would set him a sum or two, and give him pen and paper, he might get the answers pretty nigh. So after a few questions about the way to use a sextant, the master fetched ink and paper, set him a ship's course to correct for leeway and deviation, and stood over the lad, nodding away, as he worked out the figures.

"You 're a none-such, and no mistake," says he, very hearty, "and so you may tell your father from me with my compliments. It 's mate of a ship you

might be, and in no time. Well, my lad, I 'm proud to have met you, and a glass of grog at parting won't do either of us any harm, eh ? "

Harry, feeling very manlike, said he didn't suppose that it would. But it did.

He couldn't remember at any time in his life what happened next after he had drunk off the grog (which the master had mixed with his own hands), but when he came to himself he was lying in a bunk, and the *Good Intent*—so the mate was kind enough to tell him—bowling along somewhere off the Land's End.

" We couldn't afford to miss the tide," said the mate, " and 'twould have been as good as man-slaughter to put ye ashore on the quay, in the state you were, calling for the city watch to come and fight ye for a gold-laced hat. But there 's no bones broken. We 're London bound, lucky for you : and if you keep nice-spoken and civil to the old man, maybe, when we get to the Thames, he 'll give ye seaman's wages, and you can ride back to Bristol on top of a coach. Nevertheless, if you 'll take my advice, young man, ye 'll steer wide of the drink from this day forth. Your head is too delicate for it, altogether."

As I have said, Harry had often longed as a boy,

to go to sea, and here was a pleasant little trip while it lasted ; for the weather kept fair, and to his delight he found he wasn't sea-sick at all—a few hours on deck blew away the last of the spleen, or whatever it was that he owed to the master's grog. To be sure, he was worried by thoughts of his poor father and mother, and the affliction they would be in, and his broken indentures, and he puzzled his brain over the yarn he would have to pitch when he got back to Bristol. But, as the mate told him, things couldn't be mended just yet—so where was the use of fretting ?

The *Good Intent* bowled along steady up Channel before a nice sou'-westerly breeze, that shifted to nor'-west every night, and came off the land, and by the fifth noon after passing the Lizard, she was well inside the Thames mouth, with the tide at flood.

" One would say you had brought us luck," said the master to Harry, " and 'tis your own luck that I 'm not a selfish, tyrannical fellow, or I might have hardened my heart, like Pharaoh, against parting with ye."

This sounded promising, though he didn't mention anything about pay or travelling-money.

The wind had shifted, too, in their favour, and the

Good Intent fetched up the river on a nice little easterly slant. They anchored that evening off Gravesend, and moved up again on the early flood.

When Harry turned out next morning 'twas to find they were anchored again (he had heard the hawser run down in his sleep), and in the middle of a thick fog that the light wind had brought up with them. He could make out the loom of two or three other vessels, moored pretty close, but nothing at all of any shore, and this was a great disappointment, because he had hoped for his first sight of St. Paul's Cathedral.

He was standing there, staring into the fog, when the captain came on deck for a look round.

"Hallo, my lad!" says he, hearty-like. "And what might be your opinion of London?"

"Is this London?" says Harry, a bit downcast.

"It is," says the master. "Leastways, 'tis Wapping yonder—Wapping-on-the-Woze."

"You must have very good sight, sir," says Harry politely.

"I have," says the master. "Now, that there three-master there, on our starboard quarter—maybe you can't even count her masts, the weather 's so thick. No? Well, I make 'em three, plain as plain;

and what 's more, I make her out to be the *Samuel*, with my old friend, Captain Cary, on board of her."

"You don't say so," says Harry.

"I do, lad," says the master. "And now I look again, I 'm that sure of it, we'll put off and take breakfast with him, for a little surprise. Hi ! Get out the gig, there ! " he calls forward. "And you, lad, run and fetch your fiddle. My friend Cary is fond of music—fairly dotes on it, at any hour of the day, and after a good breakfast you shall pitch a tune that 'll warm his heart."

Harry, as I say, had a weakness for showing off his accomplishments. He ran for his fiddle-case with a good will, being anxious, moreover, to keep on the master's weatherside. But it all seemed very wonderful to him, and more wonderful yet when he 'd climbed down the ladder and found his seat in the boat ; for close after him the crew lowered four men that he 'd never seen before—four men that must have been stowed somewhere on board all the time. They were pale in the face, and yellow in the gills, and wild in the eyes ; but they said nothing, maybe because the mate stood handy with a belaying-pin. Their arms were trussed, just so as to let them use their hands on the ladder, and their feet hobbled

loosely, so that, once hoisted out on the ladder, they could make shift to "shuffle down.

"But what have these poor fellows done, sir?" asked Harry of the master, who stood at the tiller.

"Crimes on crimes," said he, "and by orders. I should be taking 'em straight up to Newgate. But I got a kind heart, as you know, and if so be as Captain Cary will ship 'em off to Newfoundland—where he 's bound, at a guess—why, the authorities give me a certain latitude. But, of course, it all depends on his doing it for me as a favour."

Harry thought that the master of the *Good Intent* must be indeed a kind-hearted man, and was glad of it for his own prospects. He had not much time to examine the prisoners, for in a very few strokes they were rounding under the other ship's stern, and a big ship she was, and under her stern windows a scroll, carved and painted—*Samuel—Port of London* —plain to see through the fog.

(She had a figure-head, too, of the Boy Samuel, with his hands together, a-listening for Eli; but 'twas later that Harry Glasby made acquaintance with this.)

Well, they fell alongside, and Harry was told to shin up the ladder, which he did with the fiddle-case

under his arm and the master at his heels, the prisoners biding below for the present. Very welcome they were made at once by a man who turned out to be the boatswain, and with him the master left Harry in charge, while he himself was conducted down to Captain Cary's cabin.

The boatswain, an affable-spoken man but fleshy, asked Harry what it might be he was nursing under his arm. Being told it was a fiddle, he swore that a fiddle was dearer to him than any other instrument on earth.

"Pretty thick fog, this tide," said he, "but nothing at all to what we are like to meet off the Banks. Now, what might you be staring after?" he asked, seeing that Harry's eyes were still searching across the bulwarks.

"I was hoping for a glimpse of St. Paul's Cathedral, if 'tis in sight hereabouts," answered Harry. "I 'll be proud to tell father and mother that I 've seen St. Paul's Cathedral," says he. And then of a sudden, "Oh, sir, what 's *that?*"—for the fog had lifted for a little shoreward, and he glimpsed a line of posts standing up out of a bank of mud.

"They had a fairish haul at the Old Bailey, last week," said the boatswain, like a man pleased

with the world. "Yonder's Execution Dock, my sonny."

"Execution Dock!" says Harry, his knees knocking.

"It used to be anywhere between quarter and half a mile further up," says the boatswain; "but Wapping is a growing place, and the tenants of the new houses lodged a complaint, I 'm told, that the gallowses spoiled their view. So here they 've been shipped, and, if you 'll use your eyes, you may see three brave boys dangling since yesterday—dangling at low-water mark until three tides have overflowed 'em. That 's old England, *though* you never set eyes on St. Paul's."

Word now came up that Harry was wanted below in the cabin to breakfast. Down he went, with little stomach for it; but the sight and smell of bacon, fried eggs, and coffee soon set that right, while the friendly questions asked by Captain Cary put him at his ease in no time. When the meal was done the two captains asked for a tune on the fiddle, and he played a couple with great spirit.

"Will he do?" asks the master of the *Good Intent* at the finish.

"Do!" said Captain Cary, who had been beating time with one foot and likewise in the air with his

tobacco-pipe. "If you 'd asked twice the money I 'd have took him!"

And he turns to Harry:

"My lad, you may consider yourself engaged. My own clerk and servant you shall be, with plenty of table-leavings. And now," says he, "let 's go and have a look at the others."

And now, seeing the trap he 'd fallen into, Harry plumps down on his knees, and begs for mercy.

"Tut, tut!" says Cary. "A voyage to Newfoundland and back—what is it, at your time of life? Why, cast your eye over *me*. Fifty-four next birthday, gay as a lark, and looking forward to the trip. This sort of thing happens every day in every port of the realm. And for why? His Majesty's merchant service must have men, and growing hands, too; it stands to reason. Take service with me, and you find a good master—I 've a great fancy for Bristol lads, as maybe you 're discovering. But if you prefer to make a noise ——"

Captain Cary stepped to the door, and called up the ladder:

"Mr. Barnes! I 'll trouble you to step this way, Mr. Barnes."

And down came the boatswain, so prompt that he

hadn't even waited to lay aside a bit of rope's-end he was holding.

So Harry made up his mind then and there. But he always maintained in later life that it was cruel hard on a boy to pay his first visit and be shown none of the sights of London barring a glimpse of Execution Dock.

The *Samuel* dropped down the river that evening, the fog lifting a little on the turn of the flood towards dark. She was a rich ship with half a dozen passengers on board, and choice goods for St. John's to the worth of many thousands of pounds. The captain kept a good table, and was in most ways an easy master, as he had promised; so that for a while, and with good weather holding throughout the passage, Harry couldn't find much fault with his lot.

But if Captain Cary liked Bristol seamen there was another captain off the Banks who couldn't abide them, and this was the famous pirate Bat Roberts. Everyone has heard tell of Roberts, and of his ship the *Royal Fortune*, and how in the end he was killed on board of her when the crew surrendered. Though a merciful man in a general way—that is, for a pirate—this Roberts had a queer twist in his nature, which was that if ever a man did him an injury he 'd inquire,

if he didn't know already, from what port or from what country the man hailed, and would nurse a strong hatred thenceforth against every one of that name or nation. Thus he hated everyone that hailed from :

Ireland,
Bristol,
Barbadoes, and
Martinique.

He carried at the fore always a black jack with a figure of himself embroidered on it, standing a-straddle upon two skulls, and under the skulls the letters A. B. H. and A. M. H., meaning "A Bristolian's (or Barbadian's) Head" and "A Martinican's Head." On his great black ensign at the mizzen-peak was another figure of himself hobnobbing with a tall skeleton over a red heart and three drops of blood. Roberts always dressed himself and his ship very finely, and kept his gun-deck shining like a Dutch chimney-piece.

Now about the time the *Samuel* cleared from the Thames, Roberts had made a swoop into Trepassy Bay, which is the south-easternmost bay on the Newfoundland coast. He entered the harbour with his colours flying, drums beating, and trumpets

sounding, and there, as luck would have it, he found no less than two-and-twenty vessels gathered, the crews of which took to their boats upon sight of the pirate, and escaped inland. Finding no resistance, he ransacked and either burned or scuttled all the shipping except a Bristol galley, and topped-up his devilment by burning all the wharves and fishing-stages of the poor planters along the harbour front.

Next, taking and manning the Bristol galley, and having fitted her with sixteen guns, he cruised out with her into the fogs upon the Banks, where he surprised nine or ten sail of French ships, one after another, and destroyed them all except a ship of twenty-six guns. This he took for his own use, and christened her the *Fortune*, changing her name afterwards to the *Royal Fortune*. (This was not the *Royal Fortune*, though, in which he came by his end.) Leaving the Bristol galley to the Frenchmen, he sailed away in his new prize, still dodging around the Banks, where vessel after vessel fell to him, as he boasted, like fruit in season.

It had been late in June that he sailed into Trepassy Harbour, and beside the twenty-two craft there, and the Frenchmen I spoke of, by July 20th he had taken and plundered the *Richard*, of Bideford ; the *Willing*

Maid, of Poole; the *Expectation*, of Topsham; a Virginiaman called the *Little York;* the *Love*, of Liverpool; the snow *Phœnix*, of Bristol; a brigantine of which I disremember the name (but her master's name was Thomas); a sloop called the *Sudbury;* and—fattest fowl of all—our friend the *Samuel*, of London, with Harry Glasby on board.

The pirates raced through the *Samuel* like a pack of hounds, tearing up the hatches, ransacking the hold, with axes and cutlasses breaking open all the bales, cases, boxes, they could lay hands on. When any goods came on deck that it didn't suit their fancy to carry aboard, they pitched 'em into the sea; but they carried off the worth of nine thousand pounds in cargo, besides sails, guns, powder, cordage, and ship's tools. While this was a-doing, amid the most terrible uproar and blasphemy, Roberts suggested to poor Captain Cary that they should go down to the cabin and come (as he put it) to an understanding.

By way of approach to it, Roberts began by saying that he and his men didn't sign to any laws but their own; that they didn't care a d——n for King and Parliament, nor for any Act of Grace. Neither would they ever be taken to Hope Point, to be hanged up a-sun drying as Kid's and Braddish's company

were ; but that, if they should ever be overpowered, they would put a pistol to the powder and all go merrily to hell together.

Having thus prepared the parley, he dropped upon the cabin sofa and thrust his feet out under the table, where the one foot struck against something soft and t'other against something hard—timber, by the sound of it.

"What in thunder have you beneath here?" asked Roberts, peering down under the flap of the table-cover.

"I reckon 'tis my servant, Harry Glasby," says Captain Cary. "He 's handy, but timmersome."

"Then come out of it, Harry Glasby," says Captain Roberts, and Harry crept out with his knees knocking. "But what 's that case in your hand? And what 's inside? Jewels?"

"It 's—it 's my fiddle, sir, if it please you!" stammers Harry.

"I don't know yet if it will or it won't, not having heard it," says Roberts. "But I 've always wanted a fiddle aboard my ship, having nothing but trumpets as yet, and a pack of fools scarce able to blow them in tune. So you 'll come along with me, whatever happens."

In this way Harry became a pirate. After he had been brought aboard Roberts's ship, with five or six others and the booty, there was some consultation whether to burn the *Samuel* or sink her, the passengers and crew being tumbled into her boats to get to the mainland as best they might. But in the midst of this debate yet another sail was spied, and the pirates left the *Samuel* for this new chase. They came up with her at midnight, and took her—a Bristol snow bound for Boston, Captain Bowles master, whom they used barbarously because he was a Bristol man. (And I should say here that when the question, "Where d'ye hail from?" was put to Harry, he had answered, innocent enough, "From London," thinking they meant the ship; whereby he saved the skin of his back and took one stroke of good luck among so many of ill.)

Meantime, Captain Cary slipped away in the dark, and in the end made the port of St. John's, thus saving his ship, albeit with an empty hold.

To get back to Harry.—It weighed heavily on his mind to think that he was now a pirate, and liable to be hanged if taken by a King's ship. But for the rest he had little to complain about, being given light work and never called upon to tend a gun or

make one of a boarding-party. His chief business was to play the fiddle every day to the Captain, who delighted in it after dinner.

"But," said he, "I 'd fain have a full band!"

And he sighed like a man that had missed the one thing in life to make him happy.

"If I had a fiddle or two, sir, and a bass viol," says Harry modestly, "and I might take my pick of the crew, I 'd make shift to teach 'em."

"What 's the use of talking like that, ye lubber," says Roberts, "when I 'm taking ship after ship, and not a musical instrument aboard arra one of 'em?"

Then Harry took an idea into his head—or, rather, he took two. Says he, but trembling a little in his shoes, for in Roberts's presence he always felt like David harping before King Saul:

"I made this fiddle myself, sir, with my own hands. Now, there 's a plenty of mahogany aboard, and the next vessel we take if you 'll give orders to bring off the ship's cat—much as I dislike bloodshed —— But the trouble will come over the varnish. If we were anywhere south, now, where I could go ashore and tap a tree of a sort that gives the right copal——"

"We 're heading south to-morrow," says Roberts.

"I reckon we 've worked out our luck hereabouts; not a sail within a week, and the season growing late."

Leaving the Banks, they sailed down for the West Indies, and first (for their provisions were running short) they made for Dessada Island, as a likely place—so Roberts put it, in his mirth—to fall in with consignment of supply. Nor was this a jest altogether, for many a vessel loaded with provisions from the Colonies, on pretence of trading to the coast of Africa, had a knack of being taken in these latitudes, and made pretty sure of her market.

This time, however, Roberts missed his luck, and beat up for St. Christopher, to buy victuals: where being denied by the governor, he fired on the town and burned two ships in the roads. Thence they made for St. Bartholomew, and found better entertainment; then for Brava, the southernmost of the Cape Verde Islands, and thence back along the trades for Surinam.

All this while Harry Glasby was turning over the notion he had taken, hating this life and the risk of it, but being by nature prompter to tumble into misfortune than to take a way out. But on their next traverse from the Surinam coast to Barbadoes

he fell into real trouble with a Scotsman of the crew called Frazer, a hulking seaman who despised all music but the bagpipes, and cuffed his head for being the captain's "favourite." Having measured the man's size, Harry decided to take no notice of the insult; but as he walked aft and away, he stumbled upon another of the crew, One-eyed Manby by name, a queerly shaped fellow with a softish voice, and they fell into talk.

Manby asks him, "What was Fish Macgregor saying to you just now?"

"Saying?" answers Harry. "It warn't so much what he *said*!"

One-eyed Manby seemed to fall in thought for a time. Then said he:

"Fish Macgregor has his liver upset. It takes the form that he can't abide your fiddling. But the real reason is, he hates this life, and would give his soul to get away from it."

"Why, and so would I," said Harry, in a burst of confidence; "but that 's no reason for striking a man half his size."

"If you was ever married," says Manby, "you 'd know that it 's the way folks often get taken when they are both of one mind. Now I don't care if I

own to you that I 'm just as sick of this life as either of ye. Have you ever thought of a way to escape ? "

" I have," says Harry. And with a little coaxing he let out his plan.

Manby thought for a bit, and said :

" It sounds promising. Only you must contrive with Roberts somehow that he lets me go with you after this gum. You can tell him that I know my way about the woods on these shores, and can take you to the likeliest trees, and that 's true enough. You won't tell him—though between ourselves 'tis more to the point—that without a comrade like me you 'd lose your bearings in no time, trying to get away, and be dead in three days. For my part," added Manby, " I 'd a plan to get myself transferred to the sloop." This was a small, speedy vessel, sloop-rigged, that sailed in company with the *Fortune* and (as you might put it) played frigate to the taller ship. " A good half of her crew is ripe to levant with her, some dark night, and sail home to live honest lives. But there 's no chance to persuade Elkins, though he 's a sick man, and barring Elkins there 's not a soul knows how to navigate."

(Elkins was master of the sloop. He kept his cabin

just now, with coast fever, but still worked out the reckonings and gave orders.)

"If that 's all," said Harry, "I learnt navigation when I was sixteen, and can lay a course almost as well as Roberts himself."

Manby stared at him and whistled.

"Well, you 're a wonder!" says he. "Likely you 'll be the salvation of us yet, and I love you better than ever. But will you try your plan first?" says he. "And I 'll give the wink when the time comes."

From Surinam, meeting with little luck, they sailed to Tobago, and watered, and from Tobago to Martinique,where they destroyed a crowd of Dutch interlopers, mainly to satisfy Roberts's humour, and so on to Dominica, and by Guadeloupe, around to Bonnet's Key, a small island to the north of Hispaniola. There is nothing to tell of this cruise, except that the seaman Macgregor singled out Harry to treat him more and more savagely, cursing and beating him upon the least occasion, so that the poor lad was often minded to cast himself overboard, and drown. And this he would have done, but for thinking of the sharks.

But at this Bonnet's Key came his chance

to go ashore and find the varnish for his fiddles, whereof he had made two with great pains in his spare hours. Captain Roberts readily gave leave for this, as also for Manby to go with him. Judge, then, of Harry's dismay when, the boat being lowered, there jumped into her two seamen besides Manby, and one of them this Macgregor, his worst persecutor. The other man was called Owen, and 'twas reported that he had at one time been a chaplain of the Fleet Liberty, but had fallen away through drink to his present wicked manner of life.

These four, then, having landed and beached their boat, struck into the woods in search of a tree that would yield the right gum ; Harry having provided himself with half a dozen coconut-shells for nailing to the rind, to catch the liquor. They had scarcely gone half a mile before Macgregor started his old game of cursing and bullying.

" This sea-calf," he swore, " had served his turn," which was to get them a landing. Now they were safe ashore, he would only be a hindrance to them. " What sense was there ? " he asked, " in pretending to search for an infernal gum to plaster fiddles ? "

Yet Manby, for some reason, insisted that they should look for it.

"If afterwards we want to turn the lad off and make for the boats without him, we 'll take a vote on it. But, anyways, he shall have a cupful of varnish to make his peace with Roberts."

Macgregor, though grumbling at this, held on his way for some time, but when the tree was found and cut, and while Harry held one of the shells ready for nailing, he lost the tail-end of his temper, let drive with a hammer, and broke the lad's hand sorely.

Upon this Manby stepped forward and said to him, speaking very quiet :

"Fish Macgregor, it 's time we settled accounts. For two months now you 've used this lad worse than any Dutch uncle, and now, when he might have challenged and shot you for it, you 've hurt his hand so that he can't hold a pistol. Whereby I'm going to take over this quarrel. It so happens that this is a very pretty clearing for the job. So you stand there, Fish Macgregor, and you, Sam Owen, to see fair play. You, young Glasby, come along with me while I count out twenty paces."

The pair had paced out a bare ten yards, when a bullet sang right between them past their ears. Macgregor had lost control of himself and fired, in

this way breaking a rule that holds amongst the worst pirates as well as among honest men. There were no words. Manby whipped about on the instant and fired, and Fish Macgregor dropped with a bullet in his head, and fell along, his pistol still smoking.

"You 've killed the man!" says Owen. While Harry stared with a white face at the body.

"I reckon so," said Manby, walking up very cool.

"A nice pair of fools," snarls Owen, "to go letting off your barkers at this time of all others, and here, with the ship scarcely three cables distant."

"Well, we 've got to make the more haste," says Manby. "And first of all we 'll bury this fellow."

"Why?" asks Owen.

"Why," says Manby, "because if the alarm 's been given, and we should be took in the woods, we can make out that Fish Macgregor was running ship, and we were hunting him. You carry no head on your shoulders, Sam Owen; but I 've a notion that you 're a parson, though fallen from grace, and that you still carry a Prayer-book between your skin and your shirt."

Now I shall say no more of this attempt of escaping, except that they were taken in the woods the next day, brought aboard and put on trial; and, luckily

for them, before the trial, they got news by a side-slant that the searchers had happened on Macgregor's grave and dug to the body, whereby they were able to avoid pleading what, being a proved lie, would have spoiled the defence. So they told the truth, as near as they could; that they were collecting the varnish when a quarrel sprang up, with fatal results, and that afterwards, afraid of the deed, they had taken to hiding.

They were tried then, first on suspicion of attempt to escape, and second for breach of Article 8 of the rules. I can give you that Article by heart: for 'twas nailed up in the fo'c'sle of pretty nigh every ship in our way of business, and many's the time I 've had to read it for some shipmate or other that had never been to school.

"No striking one another on board, but every man's quarrels to be ended on shore, at sword and pistol. The quarter-master of the ship, when the parties will not come to any reconciliation, will go on shore with them, taking the assistance he thinks proper, and turn the parties back to back at so many paces. At the word of command both will turn and fire instantly, or the piece will be knocked out of their hands. If both miss, they come to

their cutlasses, and he is victor who draws first blood."

All three pleaded that they had kept to the spirit of this, if not to the letter. Against the first charge they pleaded that there was no proof, but evidence on the contrary that they had been engaged in the duty for which they had been sent; to wit, collecting gum.

The case was heard before a jury in Roberts's stern-cabin, he himself presiding, and smoking his pipe over a bowl of punch. For some while, though the defence was reasonable, it looked as though things would go hard with the prisoners, and chiefly by reason that many on board had a grudge against Harry, as the captain's favourite; when of a sudden, one of the jury, Valentine Ashplant (who was afterwards hanged at Cape Corso Castle) laid two pistols on the table, and swore that Glasby should not die.

"For," said he, "Glasby is a good fellow, and I love his fiddling. And what 's more, gentlemen, I am as good a man as the best of you, and damme if ever I turned my back to any man in my life. I hope he 'll live and repent of his fault; but if he must die, here 's my pistol, and let any gentleman of the jury as cares take up the other."

"I 've a better reason than that, please your worship, why you can't hang Harry," says Manby, addressing the president.

"Eh ?" says Roberts. "What 's that ?"

"Because he can *navigate*," says Manby. "And even a jury that 's half drunk won't go for to hang a navigator."

"Ah ! to be sure," says Roberts. "Gentlemen, I was coming to that point later on." He kept his face very well, too, though this was complete news to him, and he only hoped it was true, for he wanted to save the lad.

"Navigate ?" says a juryman. "How the devil do you know he can navigate ?"

"For the same reason," says Manby, "that you won't be hanging me, either—because I 'm a woman, all this time ; and, what 's more, a respectable woman ; and, what 's more again, respectably married upon Harry Glasby here. Sam Owen read the service over us 'pon the island. He was a priest once, and once a priest is always a priest—or so I 've heard. 'Twas bad enough, sir, that Fish Macgregor should come interferin' in this delicate business, but to be seized and brought to trial, and threatened with hanging in this public way upon your honeymoon ——"

Here One-eyed Manby, whose real name was Moll Evans until she became Moll Glasby, broke down in hysterics, which put the question out of doubt. Without leaving the box the jury acquitted all three.

Well, that 's the end of Harry's misfortunes, or near about the end. Roberts made him sailing-master of the *Royal Fortune*, and as such he continued until the whole gang was broken and captured by the King's ship *Swallow*, in Whydah Roads. Everybody knows that story, and how—besides a baker's dozen (including Roberts) killed in action — there was thirty-two tried and hanged to bleach off Cape Corso Castle. Besides these there were seventeen that died on the passage to Corso, or in prison before trial, two respited, twenty sent to the plantations, seventeen to the Marshalsea, seventy-four acquitted; not to mention seventy niggers. The niggers, of course, were not put on trial, but sold. Eh? . . . Oh, somebody's perkisite — the Judge's, more than likely.

On their cruise along the African coast, Moll Glasby had been put ashore, and in this way escaped capture and the dock. Harry was among the seventy-four acquitted. He brought witnesses to prove

(1) that he abhorred the trade ; (2) that he had come into it unwillingly ; (3) that he had never been known to join a boarding-party ; and (4) that he had ever shown great kindness to all prisoners taken by the pirates. But what saved him, after all, was his fiddle, the court in its judgment finding " that artists had the best pretension to the plea of forcible enlistment against their will, from the necessity the pirates are under of sometimes engaging such for their frolics."

He did not use his liberty to rejoin his wife at Jaquin. On the contrary, I have always heard that he made straight home for England, where he set up a shop under a false name, and died a churchwarden.

VI

CAPTAIN AVERY'S HOUND

My master—Mr. Anstis, bookseller, of Redcliff, Bristol—took his evening meal at six o'clock, a rule never once broken in the seven years I served him as apprentice. As the first stroke of that hour sounded from St. Mary's Church he would leave me in charge of the shop and withdraw to his parlour in rear of it, returning as regularly on the stroke of seven to bid me put up the shutters and make myself scarce.

In this way, in the dusk of an evening early in October, I found myself alone in the shop, save for a solitary customer who had entered a few minutes before Mr. Anstis's departure. It was another rule of my master's never to harass his customers into purchasing, or even to seem aware of them until invited. They might, if they would, take stock of his shelves by the hour, and in the end wander out without having bought anything. So for a while I paid no attention to this one, who moved about near

the doorway, never approaching the desk where I sat busy with the ledger on the Michaelmas bills.

By-and-by, however, as the light waned—and there was a fog, too, making up from the river—I broke off my work to trim a lamp and get out the tinder-box, and as I did so it struck me that my customer was hanging about the forepart of the shop, because there, and there only, the windows still gave light enough to study the shelves. And yet, seeing that these shelves contained nothing but volumes of divinity, and remembering that when he first entered I had taken him for a seafaring man in search of a tide-almanack or a book of longitudes, or something of the sort, I felt that he might have lost his bearings.

Stepping forward, I asked if I could be of use, either by fetching a hand-lamp or by guiding him to any particular book or shelf.

He turned around sharply and faced me. He was a seaman, for certain ; his clothes smelt of pitch and oakum. I could scarcely make out his features, and this not only because of the dusk and his standing with his back to the light, but because a thick black beard covered his face to the cheek-bones. His very eyes—they shone, in spite of the gloom—seemed to

stare out of this beard, like an owl's from an ivy-bush, as the saying is.

" 'Twouldn't be any use to me, mate, thanking you kindly," said he, in a low, hoarse voice, not unfriendly. " To tell truth, I can't read."

This took me somewhat aback, to be sure. I cast about for a polite way to ask how it came to pass that one unable to read should choose to amuse himself for three-quarters of an hour in a bookshop, and, as I hesitated, a queer feeling came over me—a feeling that I was in no bookshop, but deep in an unknown forest, and that the eyes watching me belonged to some crouching wild creature. Yet they seemed no more unfriendly than the voice had been—alert and anxious, rather.

" At any rate," I said feebly, " you want some book or other ? We sell nothing but books here."

" What should I want with a book," he asked, " when I 've told you I can't read ? I want *you*—leastways, if, as I reckon, your name is Seraphim Johns."

" Yes, I am Seraphim Johns," said I, wondering.

" You needn't speak it so loud," said he very quickly. " I didn't tackle you at the desk yonder, the back parlour being, as I reckoned, within earshot,

and there being no occasion for your master to hear. I waited for you to come forward. I said to myself you must come forward soon or late, if 'twere to put up the shutters. For Seraphim Johns were the name given to me, and a bit hunched in the back. Whereby I made sure you must be the lad—Seraphim Johns, living with an aunt by the name of Trudgian; address, top of Christmas Stairs, Bristol, England."

"Well, now that you 've found me," said I, "what do you want of me?"

Although I had surely put the most natural question in the world, he took it and seemed to turn it over—turned it over, in fact, for several moments before answering:

"What do I want? That might be long, and wouldn't be easy. But, first place, I want to know about a man that called on your aunt yesterday—or it might be to-day."

"A man?" said I. "What kind of man should be calling on my aunt? She has a friend or two of her own sex; but barring the curate once a week, and the doctor when I was ill, and the chimney-sweep at spring-cleaning, I 've never known a man cross her door, year in or year out."

He heard me out, and went on patiently, for all the world as though I had not spoken.—

"A middling man with a bluish, watery eye and a light-coloured beard on his chin. You might call it thinnish; looks, you might say, as it had growed there by accident. A trick he has, too, of looking over his shoulder. You can't mistake *that*, anyway. And if he didn't call yesterday, nor yet he didn't call to-day, why, then, he 'll call to-night, or to-morrow morning at latest."

"I haven't seen him, anyhow," said I; "and I can't call any such man to mind. What 's his name? And what would be his business?"

The seaman pulled off his cap, searched within its lining, and found a scrap of paper. By the feel of it, as he passed it to me, I could tell that it was not only creased, but dirty.

"I might speak the name out, softly-like; but I 've noted all through life that lawyers and clerks, and such-like, pay more attention to a thing when 'tis written down. Can you read *that?*"

I could not, for the scrawl was in pencil, and by this time the dusk in the shop had turned almost to darkness. So I walked back with it to my desk, found the tinderbox, struck out a spark, and lit a match.

"Softly, now," the man warned me.

"No need," I assured him. "Mr. Anstis is safe in his parlour for half an hour yet." I bent over the scrap of paper, and spelled out the name written upon it. "'Jno. Avery.' But you don't mean to say—not *the* John Avery? Not the ——"

I broke down, stammering.

He nodded at me across the light of the sulphur match as it burned low in my hand.

"That 's him, mate. 'Not the Great Mogul?' were the words on your lips, if I make no mistake. Well, then, you 've heard tell of him, and it *is* the Great Mogul, as was, otherwise Jack Avery and a swine. You 'll excuse me."

He stepped out and spat forcibly into the street, returned, and nodded at me again.

"To-night or to-morrow—and I 'm open to bet 'tis to-night—he 'll be calling on your aunt."

"But why, in the world?" I asked. "Why should Captain Avery—if you 're sure it is Captain Avery ——"

"See here, my lad," said this strange seaman; "let you and me have things above-board. You deal honest with me, and tell what you know of Avery, and I 'll be honest with you; though I can't tell all

I know about him, for the reason that 'twould take me from now to to-morrow morning."

"Why, sir," I answered, "I 've heard my aunt speak of him from time to time, and of the stories told of his doings out by Madagascar. And I 've heard her wonder what became of him in the end, and of all his money. She always talked in a way as if she had never set eyes on him, and I don't believe she ever had, though I can't take oath she ever said it in so many words."

The man nodded.

"Like enough she never did. Avery's doings were mostly down Madagascar way, and I don't call to mind that your aunt—Mrs. Trinidad, we used to call her—ever had business in those seas. But tell me now, what made ye jump so, just now, when I showed you his name on that bit of paper?"

"Why, sir," I answered, "because if you had come in here five hours ago I could have shown you a broadsheet all about Captain Avery; but I forgot——" said I, coming to a halt.

"That 's all right, lad," said the seaman, nodding again. "I told you I couldn't read. But I never said I couldn't reason. Heave ahead."

"The broadsheet," said I, "was called 'A

Particular Account of the Crimes and Misdeeds of that Notorious Bloody Pirate Captain John Avery, telling, among other matters, of his Astonishing Marriage with the Grand Mogul's Daughter, and of his Miserable End Amid Great Wealth.' "

"Which is lies from start to finish," the seaman assured me very heartily. "He never married the child at all—she being no more than a child, on her way to Mecca with a shipload of offerings. Avery took the treasure, but let the ship put back to India, and the maid with her. 'Tis about the only creditable thing he ever did in his life, so to his credit I don't mind its going. As for his miserable end—well, that's a pleasure to come. It consoles a man as can't read, with all these lies in print."

"These broadsheets are written for the market," said I. "This one went on to tell how, having married her, he settled in India, founded an empire, and built a fleet. I could have read it all out to you; but, as it happens, a customer came in this morning ——"

Here I came to a standstill again, and the man broke into a laugh.

"A customer *with* a straggly beard, hey?—*and* an eye like a stockfish? Well, you may be a scholar, my

lad; but it hasn't made you over-quick at the uptake. That was Avery, of course—Avery himself—come to read the fine fellow they make him out in print. That 's Avery, all over; he 'll feed on lies, just as innocent as the folk he feeds on 'em. He 's one walkin', blazin', day-and-night Lie-Factory. The man hasn't enough of straight in his bone to make a pair of dominoes. Well, now, I 'll tell ye two things more. Firstly, he 's passing at Bristol here under the name of John Hayes, and, second, he 's calling on your aunt. Yes, and I 'll tell you a third thing. Whatever his business with your aunt—and I can make a near guess at it—he ain't calling to enquire for her health."

"I 'm obliged to you for warning me, sir," said I. "But why are you doing it? I never met you before, and at this moment I don't even know your name."

"And I don't see how my name helps," he answered pretty quickly. "But, if you like, we 'll make it William Hound. That 's the name Avery gave me, anyway—*at* my christ'ning. 'Hayes' and 'Hound—' You can get them two fixed in your mind, I don't doubt. Nor you needn't be obliged to me, neither. In an ordinary way, of course, I 'd as lief as not do a good turn to anyone—man, woman, or

child—and liefer. But I 'm not taking all this trouble for your aunt, that I 've never seen—leastways, not to my knowledge ; nor again for you, that I never clapped eyes on before this evening."

" Then why, sir ? " I asked, as he came to a pause.

He seemed to reflect over his answer.

" You may put it," he said at length, " as I 've got a little debt to pay. Yes, that 's it—a little debt," he repeated.

In the dusk I could not see his face brighten up, but his tone was cheerful as if he had struck on a bright new thought.

" There 's one thing puzzles me yet, sir," I went on, " if you don't mind my saying it ; and that is, why you sought me out instead of going straight to my aunt, seeing that you know where she lives ? "

" By the number of questions you 're asking, you must have an inquiring mind, my lad. Comes of living with such a mort of books, I suppose. Demme "—he broke off and peered about and around —" if I knowed there was so many in the world ! How in thunder folks can find the time—but that 's neither here nor there at this moment. ' Why didn't I go straight to your aunt ? ' says you. Well,

and I don't mind answering you that, neither. Fact is, I wasn 't sure but she was an old acquaintance of this Avery's, she having been mixed up with the Trade in her time—which is between you and me and the gate-post, of course. I didn't see how it could be, but I couldn't be sure. So I got on your track and came first to you. When you said that they were strangers, I saw you was telling the truth."

"Hold hard a bit, Mr. Hound," I corrected him; "'strangers, for aught I knew,' were the words, or something of the sort. I may be mistaken, of course, and if you tell me he 's paying a call on her ——"

"Oh, you needn't sweat over that," said Mr. Hound easily. "I know, fast enough, what 's drove him to call on her."

As he said this I heard a sound that told me my master had finished his meal in the back parlour. He was pushing back his chair. In another two minutes he would have filled and lit his long pipe, and would be coming forth to bid me shut up shop.

I whispered this information to Mr. Hound, adding that, if he would wait for me, as soon as the shutters were up he could walk home with me to Christmas

Stairs and be introduced to my aunt. He nodded, and slipped outside.

"You see," I told him five minutes later, on our way to the Bridge, "my aunt is a difficult woman in some ways, and specially with strangers. I've never known her admit one, and I'll have to say a word to prepare her before I show you in. Which makes me doubt," I went on, "that she'd open the door to Captain Avery ——"

"To Mr. Hayes," corrected Mr. Hound, "if you don't mind."

"I'll remember, next time," said I. "Well, then, I doubt if she'd open the door to this Mr. Hayes, if he called."

"I reckon she will," said Mr. Hound. "He has the pass-word—and so have I, for that matter. If she didn't open to favour she'd open to fear. But I agree with you, lad, that yours is the best way. Go you in to your aunt, leaving me at the door, or in the passage. Don't give my full name—it wouldn't mean anything to her. Tell her you've brought home William—him that was boatswain, one time, on th' old *Mastiff*, and if that don't fetch her, you may put in that he wants nothing—neither money nor religion."

We climbed the long flight of Christmas Stairs, and at the head of them I let myself in with my latchkey, using it more softly than usual. Mr. Hound came to a halt on the slate doorstep.

I took a couple of steps into the dark passage, and there I, too, came to a halt. Within the parlour—behind the door to the left, a little ahead of me—someone was talking, low, quick, and eager. It was not my aunt's voice, but a man's. It seemed to me I had heard it before, and not so long ago, either. I have a wit that works slowly. I turned half-about in the passage, and was aware of Mr. Hound at my shoulder. He had stolen after me, making no noise.

"Avery!" he whispered.

My wits cleared.

"Hayes, I rather think!" whispered I.

I heard him chuckle.

"Good boy!" he said in my ear. "Go you in boldly, and don't you let her be persuaded. If she weakens, whistle for me."

I opened the parlour door and walked in.

The man—he was standing with his back to the door, and still speaking, when my entrance interrupted him—whipped about as if an adder stung

him. I recognised him at once for my customer of the forenoon.

"Ma'am!" he cried, whisking about again and appealing to my aunt, who sat on the far side of the round parlour-table, with a lamp before her. "I thought—you let me understand ——"

"It 's all right," said my aunt composedly. "This is my nephew, Seraphim Johns. If you trust me, Mr. Hayes, you will have to trust Seraphim, who writes my letters for me and transacts all my little business. Seraphim, I did not hear the door-latch; you must have come in very quietly. This is Mr. Hayes."

"Good-evening," said Mr. Hayes, but still in a twitter. He turned to my aunt again. "If you assure me, ma'am ——"

"I do," said she. "Seraphim is no talker, and it is necessary that he should have our confidence if I am to help you in this business."

She paused, looking straight at him, waiting for his answer. I, too, kept my eyes on him; and the longer I looked the less I stomached him, and the less believable it seemed that this broken, stooping, furtive man, shifting his weight from one foot to another as he shifted his eyes from my aunt to me,

should be the famous sea-rover of whom I had heard tell since childhood, as indeed had every boy in every seaport in the country—the great Captain Avery, the daring Captain Avery, who had captured the Grand Mogul's daughter, and taken the worth of a kingdom out of the Grand Mogul's ship. My mind, as I have already said, works slowly. It worked just then upon the thought that Mr. Hound had been hoaxing me. Yet here was the man who had bought the broadsheet; and, as Mr. Hound—now waiting in the passage—had warned me, here he was, paying a call on my aunt and answering to the name of Hayes.

"What does Mr. Hayes want?" I asked, after my aunt had waited some seconds for a sign from him or a word, but without getting one or the other.

"He is a seafaring man. Retired," said my aunt. "As is often the fortune of seafaring men, he has picked up with some valuables and wishes to dispose of them. But being, as I say, just a plain seaman and unknown hereabouts, he reckons that the jewellers would cheat him, even if they didn't charge him with stealing them. So he comes to me, having heard that they trust me. For, as you know, Seraphim, I sold them the few pearls that were

all I brought back from the West Indies—my honest property—and on the strength of what they gave me I have kept house here and brought you up to a trade. Now, God knows," my aunt went on piously, "my savings are running low. They will last, I hope, until you are out of your articles ——'

"And then, Aunt Hannah," I put in, "I shall be able to maintain you. But what has Mr. Hayes to do with our affairs, that we should discuss them before him?"

"Why, this," answered my aunt. "I have never desired a long life, Seraphim, since I embraced the promise of Redemption. Yet the Word forbids that a Christian should shorten his own days wilfully, and while I live I 'd find it bitter to be beholden even to you, my own blood."

"It 's still queer to me, aunt," said I, with a glance at Mr. Hayes, who still shifted his weight from one leg to the other, "that here you should be talking, before a stranger —— But maybe Mr. Hayes is an old friend?"

"No," confessed my aunt. "He came recommended to me. I know him, too, by reputation. I have been sore driven. There 's no question of the worth of the things, and if, with my name for always

dealing honest, and him promising to give twenty per cent. on what I get for him on property, there 's no disputing ——"

I stood there looking at Mr. Hayes—at the great Captain Avery—who still said nothing, but had taken to fumbling a hand in his coat-pocket; and many feelings divided me. There was pity for my aunt; there was shame of myself, that in all the years she had tended me I had never won the confession of her straits by tenderness and in privacy; there was stark, staring wonder that she, rigid as a bar of iron in all my recollection, should have endured so long to break down of a sudden before a stranger; there was disgust and suspicion of him, in whom I read an ingratiating tiptoe coward; there was a wild wonder at the contrast between him and his reputation; but mixed with all, and drowning all, was a glorious sense that I, Seraphim Johns, hunchback and bookseller's apprentice, had come to my own and of a sudden was a man, a master.

"Mr. Hayes," I asked gently, "is not known hereabouts?"

"That is his difficulty, Seraphim," said my aunt.

"I wonder," said I. "And you say it 's jewels he

wishes us to dispose of for him? What sort of jewels?"

"You may trust my nephew," said Aunt Hannah to Mr. Hayes, who still fumbled with his right-hand pocket. You will note that, up to this, he had spoken scarce half a dozen words, and left the explaining to her; but, indeed, it was plain to see that, whatever the reason, a pitiable terror possessed the man; so that my aunt, as I thought, was helping him out, much as a nursemaid coaxes a child that is shy and tongue-tied before company. "You may be as open with Seraphim as you have been with me. He asks what kind of stones you wish us to sell for you. Show him a sample."

Mr. Hayes pulled from his pocket a small bag or pouch made of bladder, and tied about the neck with a tarry string. His fingers shook on this. When it was unknotted he dipped them into the bag, searched for a moment, and drew forth something which he laid on the table, still covering it with his hand as though it had been a captured butterfly. But at length, loosening his fingers, he found courage to pull away his hand and expose the thing.

It was a ruby, something larger than a shilling-piece. The lamp shone down and into it. Like a

sudden drop of blood it shone on the mahogany table—a large, fixed drop of blood, shot with fire.

I was stepping forward to examine it, when Mr. Hayes, who had turned his face slowly towards me, across his shoulder, gave a start, and, uttering a noise like a squeal, crouched over the table and covered the stone again with his hand.

"There is some trick!" he gasped out. "I know you! Who are you? Where—where was it ——"

He gulped. From the first I had noted the front of the man's throat, that it bulged with a large Adam's apple, as they call it, which worked up and down all the while as though he chewed on a cud. Just now it seemed to be choking him.

"There is no trick, Mr. Hayes," said I. "You met me this morning in Mr. Anstis's bookshop, where I sold you a broadsheet you were anxious to buy—on the exploits and crimes of one Captain Avery."

I glanced from him to my aunt as I dropped out the name after a little pause; and the glance satisfied me. Her face went grey as a ghost's.

"Aunt Hannah," I said, "it 's queer to me, as I 've been trying to tell you, why, if so driven for money, you couldn't be open with me, your own nephew, never ungrateful, I think, and now a grown

man. It 's queer to me you should be trafficking rather with this Mr. Hayes—a stranger to you, eh ? "

" He was sent to me, Seraphim," my aunt stammered. " He brought a letter and proofs. The stones are genuine."

" The stones ? " I let out a laugh, and, with a quick clutch, had Mr. Hayes's wrist in my grip. " Drop it, sir ! If you drop it, I won't hurt you. Oh, yes, here 's a stone genuine enough to go bail for the others. But we will ask someone who knows. . . . Mr. Hound ! " I called.

I had twisted Avery's arm behind his back, and, under the pain of it, loosened his fingers and slid the ruby into my own hand. As I let go his wrist, I called the name. And Avery, as he recovered to make a spring, went tottering back against the sideboard, his face like death, his eyes wide and fixed on the door. It opened, and Mr. Hound strolled in, coolly, working a quid of tobacco in his cheek. On the other side of the table my aunt stood up gaunt against the lamp.

" It 's all right, ma'am," said Mr. Hound sociably. " There ain't going to be no robbery on your premises to-night, nor yet no murder ; nor I ain't

even meaning to step out into the lane and raise the cry that you 're entertainin' Captain Avery; though for more than one merchant in Bristol that would be good hearing. My name is Wright, ma'am —William Wright, and whether you 've heard of me or no, I 've heard tell of you—back in the West Indies, as it might be. But, whether or no, I 'm here first, to see that man don't impose here on no widow nor on no orphan. Next place, I 'm come to fetch out that blackguard in the corner, and start him upon another run. Yes, John Avery, it 'll be a many times yet you 'll wish yourself dead afore my hands learn mercy on you, and nip the last breath in your scrag throat."

My aunt had pulled herself together bravely.

"Seraphim," she asked, "Who is this man? Did you bring him into the house?"

"I did," said I. "Who he is I don't know, except that he calls himself William Wright. A while back it was William Hound."

"Hound is the name *he* called me," said the seaman, pointing at Avery, who crouched back in the corner with a snarl on his face. "*Him* to call me 'Hound!' But Hound it was, with a glassful of wine flung in my face for the christening, and Hound it

is now and for ever and ever. Amen. A parson couldn't have christened surer, Jack Avery."

"Look here!" said my aunt, standing up to him and hardening her jaw—and the way she took a grip on herself was a marvel to me. "Whoever you are, you two, this is my house, and I 'll have no brawling in it—not so much as a back-answer. I didn't invite either of you, and you can show me your backs just as soon as you like. Well, then, Mr. Wright—or Hound, or whatever you call yourself—Mr. Hayes here has told me his business; perhaps you 'll state yours."

"With pleasure, ma'am," said he, changing his tone, and jerking up a finger towards his forelock. "My business is to hinder a lady like yourself—or anyone else, for that matter—from putting trust in Jack Avery, or hindering the path he walks with me behind him. You see that stone, ma'am?" He pointed to the ruby which I had set back on the table. "'Tis one of many, and the history of it will do for all. The true Burma colour it is—the best in the world—and he 's asking you to trade it, eh?"

"Putting questions is not telling a story," said my aunt.

"You 're right, ma'am," he owned, "and I ask

your pardon. Well, the story is that, one fine day, me and certain shipmates of mine found ourselves on the Madagascar coast, with a couple of sloops—I won't say how or where we came by them ——"

"You needn't," she jerked out. "You stole them out of Port Royal."

"Terrible clever woman, your aunt is," said Mr. Hound, taken aback, and slewing round at me with a blank grin, at which I nearly laughed outright. Presently he found his helm again. "The reason I mention them sloops, ma'am, is that me and my mates was uneasy about them; and when Avery here, in the *Duke*, came sailing down to our anchorage, at first we took him for a Government frigate, and skimmed ashore into the woods, where we posted sentinels.

"The *Duke*, ma'am,—as I dare say you know—was one of two Bristol vessels, carrying thirty guns and upwards of two hundred men, that the Spaniards hired to put down the Martinique smuggling trade. She was lying in the Groins, with her companion ship, the *Duchess*, ready to start for the Main, when this Avery—that had been her mate—made the captain drunk, sent him ashore in irons, and sailed

away for Madagascar—where, as I say, he happened on us.

"Well, he wanted men, ma'am—having a biggish plan in his head. So he sent up a messenger with a white flag, and after some parley we agreed to join forces and sail with him for the coast of Araby. 'Twas on this passage, ma'am, and off the Indus River, that we took the Grand Mogul's ship, about which there was so much music at the time—and that there stone along with it.

"Oh, I don't deny it was Avery's planning, and a bold stroke. The queer thing about Jack Avery is, and was, that for all his white liver—and a rotten coward you are, Jack—he was always scheming, and his notions would have done credit to Julius Cæsar, as they say. Not one of us could hold a match to him.

"So now, with our holds full of treasure, he starts a project that we should sail back for Madagascar, build a fort and a magazine, and make ourselves lords of the land. That was his talk; but all the while my gentleman had a dirtier card in his sleeve. First move, he sends off a boat to each of the sloops, to fetch their captains for what, in his grand way, he called a Council of War. And what do you reckon

the fools agreed to ? ' Why,' says he, ' we 're bound back for Madagascar, and the *Duke,*' says he, ' can hold her own against any vessel we 're likely to meet in these waters. But if a gale should happen to separate us, you in the sloops will be taken for certainty, and so much wealth lost.' Believe me or not, he persuaded them over to transfer all their treasure aboard the *Duke,* in chests, that he sealed with three seals. 'Tis my comfort to this hour that I was in irons at the time, he having charged me false with hiding a keg of pearls that was afterwards found aboard the *Duke* and, as I 've heard since, in his own cabin. 'Twas then, ma'am, he called me ' hound,' and christened me, and the mark of the glass I could show you, if I were to shave on the left cheek here, pretty nigh the point of the jaw.

" But that 's a trifle—though in the end he won't find it so. As I was telling, these fools of captains transhipped all our plunder on board the *Duke,* and so for two days, in fair weather, we all kept company. On the second night—with a brisk breeze blowing and no moon to warn us—the *Duke* set a new course and gave us the slip.

" When the day broke we reckoned—poor

innocents—as she had separated from us by accident. On we held for Madagascar and the randy voo, always hoping to pick her up—hoping, anyway, that we 'd find her at the anchorage. I leave ye to guess, ma'am, what we said when we opened it and our last hope went.

" Well, yes, a good many words was flying, and them two fool-captains, being out of fresh provisions, built a fort on land, and started a settlement something on Avery's plan—and something like seventy-five per cent. short. But what I said was, ' That devil's in debt to you for as dirty an injury as one man can play on another. But, over and above, to me he 's in debt for an insult. Give me an open boat and a pair of sculls. I want none of your settlements and harems and playing at sultans. I want the desire of my heart, which is Jack Avery. Belike,' said I, ' he 's a thousand miles to windward afore this ; but that don't signify. If the sea spares me atween this and Africa, I 'll have him ; the slower the sport, the better to my taste. I don't want to die, nor I don't want him to die ; I want to get him on a rope sooner or later, and twitch—twitch—twitch until his life 's a bit worse nor hell. Then I 'll take care to linger it out.'

"I 've grilled a bit myself, ma'am, on the way. I caught up with him first in New Providence, where he started to live as a lord. Not for a year after he 'd been forced to pack out of New Providence; not till he 'd found Boston unhealthy, and Marblehead after Boston; nor again till I 'd hunted him back to Bideford and 'cross to Ireland, and Waterford, Dublin, nor Cork; not afore I had to show myself one day in Newry as he was trying to pass off a di'mond—did he know the face to put on his hound, though that it was following he must have sensed long before.

"You see, ma'am, it don't matter any longer. The man has jewels to buy himself a coach-and-six and bribe his way to Parlyment. Only I don't let him part with 'em, and that keeps him going, going all the time, on an empty belly. He 'd be glad to die. Any time these five years he 'd be glad to die; but he hasn't the pluck to do it for himself, and, knowing his ways, I know when to slack out rope a bit and when to haul tight. Answer me, Jack Avery! Is it truth or lies I 've been telling this lady?"

My aunt and I turned our eyes on the wretch in the corner; but the body—I cannot call it man—abjectly hid its face and whimpered.

"He broke the rules," said my aunt. "But I don't want to hear any more of him. Take him away."

"You hear, Jack Avery?" Mr. Hound called to him. "The lady is doing no business to-night, and I reckon, as she opened by saying, she won't be sorry to see the backs of us both. Pick up your stone and quit. You shall have your start at the foot of the steps, below here—five minutes as usual."

Captain Avery clutched his ruby and ran out. Mr. Hound stayed only to wish us good-evening. I followed him to the front door.

Half-way down the cobbled stairway the mayor and corporation of Bristol had erected an iron bracket and kept a lamp hanging to light the feet of wayfarers. I saw the shadows of the two men pass under it and lengthen. For a minute or so before returning to my aunt I listened for the footsteps of the leader to break into a run.

—And in my dreams that night I heard the footsteps of the pair, now running, now slacking, but going on for ever and ever.

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CAPTAIN KNOT

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Captain Knot

AARON KNOT, master of the Virginia ship *Jehoiada*. though a member of the Society of Friends and a religious man by nature, had a tolerant and catholic mind, a quiet but insatiable curiosity in the ways of his fellow-men (seafarers and sinners especially), with a temperate zest for talking with strangers and listening to them. He liked his company to be honest, yet could stretch a point or two in charity. He knew, and liked to think, that it takes all sorts to make a world. At sea—and he had passed forty-five of his sixty years at sea—he would spend long hours, night after night, in his cabin, peaceably thinking about God, and God's wonders, and the purpose of it all. Ashore, his heart warmed to the red light behind the blinds of a decent tavern. He was old enough, and wise enough, to know that for him the adventure would be sober. He knew at first

taste good ale and good company from bad, and no stranger to whom he offered a pipeful could deny the quality of his tobacco, the best grown on the Rappahannock. He wore the strict Quaker dress, from broad hat down to square shoes with buckles. His features had a large Roman gravity. His hair, of an iron-grey, still strong in growth and combed over temples noticeably massive, was tied at the back with a wisp of black ribbon. His stature was six feet or a little over, and his build proportionate. In a man of sixty years one looks less to the waistband than to the depth of chest.

This Captain Knot, having brought the *Jehoiada* up Avon on a full spring tide, moored her off Wyatt's Wharf, settled with his crew, declared his cargo (mainly tobacco), and done all necessary business with his consignee, bent his steps towards the Welcome Home Tavern at the head of Quay Street. The date was Saturday, August 11th, 1742: the time about seven o'clock in the evening.

Of all the taverns in all the ports known to him the Welcome Home was Captain Knot's favourite house of call, and to-night it looked as cosy and well-to-do as ever; the sign newly painted and varnished, the doorstep white with holystone, the

brick floor clean as a pin, fresh sawdust in the spittoons; the brass candlesticks on the chimney-piece, the brass chains of the clock-weights, the copper warming-pan on the wall, the ware on the dresser all a-twinkle in so much of evening light as drifted in by the open doorway or over the red window-blinds.

Yes, the place still prospered. "But why, then, is it so empty?" wondered Captain Knot—"and on a Saturday night?"

There were, in fact, but two customers in the room, two seafaring men seated and talking together on the settle beyond the fireplace; or rather, the one talking low and earnestly, the other listening. The listener—who was clearly the elder—held a long pipe and had a mug of beer beside him. The other had neither pipe nor mug. He leaned forward with his wrists on his knees and his hands clasped, nor did he shift his position when answering Captain Knot's "Good evening" with a "Good evening, sir." Lowering his voice, he went on with his argument, the murmur of which could not hide a Scottish accent.

Captain Knot threw the pair a look before rapping on the table. "House!" he called, threw the

younger man a second, slightly longer look as if searching his face in the dusk, and walking to the window, stared out upon the street.

The landlady entered, and he whipped about.

"Mrs. Walters?"

"At your service, sir . . . Why, if it isn't Captain Knot! For a moment—and you standing there with your back to the light ——"

"Husband well?"

"Quite well, sir, the Lord be praised!—and what 's more, sir, he warned me the *Jehoiada* had come in . . . but with so much housework on one's mind! And I hope it 's been a good passage, Captain? Haler I never saw you looking."

"Pretty fair, ma'am: nothing to grumble at," the Captain answered, but absent-mindedly. His brows had drawn together in a slight frown as one of the men on the settle made a sudden shuffling movement with his feet. "Much, on the contrary, to be thankful for," he went on briskly, pulling himself together. "And pretty hale yet, as you say, for a man of sixty. But where 's thy husband, that he neglects his old customers? Thou gave me a start, ma'am—a scare, till I took notice thy cap was no widow-woman's."

"Walters?" said the wife. "Oh, Walters is like every other fool in Bristol, crazy after the new preacher. You wouldn't think it in a man of his solid habits. He started at four o'clock to walk all the way to Kingswood—on a Saturday, too!"

"But who is this new preacher, ma'am?"

"Why, haven't you heard? Oh, but I forgot—you have only arrived to-day, and all the way from —from ——"

"From the Potomac, ma'am."

"But even in America, sir, you must have heard tell of him—the great John Wesley, that is setting half England by the ears."

"Well, as a fact, ma'am," said Captain Knot coolly, "I *have* heard tell of him once or twice, and the first time was over in Georgia, where I 'm sorry to say they did not think much of him."

"'Not think much of him!'" The younger of the two seamen rose abruptly from the settle and thrust himself into the conversation. "Show me the man as dares to say he doesn't think much of John Wesley, and I 'll say to his face, 'John Wesley was sent straight from Heaven, as sure as John the Baptist.'" The man's hands and muscles of his still youthful face twitched with excitement.

"You mustn't mind Peter Williamson, sir," interposed Mrs. Walters. "He's young yet, and was converted almost a week ago ——"

"Glory!" put in Williamson. "Hallelujah!—and I don't care who knows it."

"Though I wonder, Pete," Mrs. Walters went on, "that with all your fervour you're not out at Kingswood, too, this fine evening, but sitting here and all the time ordering nothing. One way or the other you're losing your privileges, and that you can't gainsay."

"I'm here, ma'am, on my Father's business," stammered Williamson. "If I've forgot the due of your house in this zeal o' mine ——"

"Fetch Master Williamson a mug of your strong home-brewed, and another for me," ordered Captain Knot briskly. He ignored the younger seaman, who had twice made as if to rise and go, and twice faltered and sat down again.

"My young friend," said Captain Knot to Williamson, when the landlady had gone out, "so thou art on thy Father's business? And what might that be?"

"The saving of souls, sir," answered Williamson promptly. "This man's, for instance." He jerked a thumb at his companion.

"Ah? What 's his name?"

"Haynes, sir—Jim Haynes. I know his need, and it 's a bitter hard one."

"'Haynes'?" Captain Knot pondered. "No, I don't recall the name. Well, friend, I 'll take thy word about knowing his need. As to knowing his soul, and dealing with it, on a seven-days'-old conversion, I am not so sure. Souls are kittle, friend, as they say up in thy country of North Britain. Take mine, for example—and I dare say a passable example, as souls go. It has its needs, God knows; yet I have a notion that the cure of 'em would give thee much trouble and yield me much amusement."

"I take ye for a releegious man, sir; though it beats me how you guessed I was out of Scotland. At first sight I said, 'Yon elderly gentleman has had convictions of sin at least, or I 'm mistaken.'"

"Plenty." Captain Knot walked over to the empty fireplace, turned his back to it, and parted his broad coat-tails so that one hung over each arm. "Plenty, my friend, at one time and another. But I never crowd sail on my conscience, nor will I allow another man to do it. I 'm master of that ship; and so it is, or should be to my notion, with every man. 'The Kingdom of God is within you.' Ah,

here comes Mrs. Walters with the beer! Thy good health, my friend. As I was saying, or about to say, every man has a soul of his own, and is responsible for it. That 's a tidy number, and all different. On top of that, there 's animals, as some hold. Why there 's Indians, over on my side of the world, make gods of the very vermin on their bodies. And what shall we say about ships now?"

"You 're talking too deep for me, sir," said Williamson, rubbing his jaw. "A ship with a soul, you say?"

"Why not? I put it to thee as a seaman. Well, I won't press the word 'soul:' but there 's a something belonging to her, and to her only, whats'ever ship she may be."

"I 'm not denying as a ship may have a character," owned Williamson, who was young enough, and enough of a Scotsman, to rub shoulders fondly against anything hard and metaphysical.

"'Character'?" echoed Captain Knot with a faint accent of scorn, and still nursing his coat-tails. "Thou art old enough, by thy looks, to have seen a ship — ay, and felt her — running down the trades, with t' gallant sails set and stuns'ls out like the wings on a butterfly, floating

and striving after heaven. Hast never had that feeling?"

"I know what you mean, sir," confessed Williamson.

"Then," advised Captain Knot, sharply, "don't pretend to me she was sailing to heaven on her character, like a servant maid after a situation. I don't know at what point in building or rigging the Lord puts the spirit in; but a spirit there is, and a soul, even in my old *Jehoiada*. For all that, she'll nag and sulk like a man's old wife. Ships? There be ships afloat comely as Mary Magdalen, and, like her, torn with devils; beautiful, born to be damned. I've known and pitied 'em, as I'd pity a girl with her pretty face set t'ards hell. Why, I could tell of the ——"

Here Captain Knot with a start disengaged both hands from under his coat-tails, smote the palm of his left with the knuckles of his right, and cried: "I have it! I never forget a face! That man"—he pointed a finger at the older seaman, who shrank back sideways on the settle before it—"I never heard his name till five minutes ago, but the *Rover* was his ship. I remember his face on the deck of

her as we parted. Ay, the *Rover*, Captain Kennedy —Mrs. Walters!"

The older seaman staggered up from the settle. He would have made for the door; but Captain Knot had stepped to the exit and stood barring it.

"You can't harm me," stammered the seaman. "I got the King's pardon for it these four years."

"Who wants to harm thee?" asked Captain Knot gently. "I only want to see thy face. Mrs. Walters, ma'am, the nights are closing in, and I'll ask the favour of a candle."

Mrs. Walters brought a candle and handed it to Captain Knot. "We will have a third mug of ale, ma'am, if thou please, and this one mulled hot, with a clove or two."

He took the candle, placed it on the high chimney-piece, and under it studied the seaman's features, keeping silence until the landlady had left the room. The wick burned dimly in the tallow, and at first the light showed him but a pair of eyes staring out from a frame or fringe of black hair. They were at once defiant in the surface and timid in their depths, eyes of a man at bay, hunted, and even haunted. Captain Knot took up the candle again, and held it close. The lower part

of the face was weak, but neither sensual nor unrefined.

"When you 've quite finished," growled the man.

"So Jim Haynes is his name?" Captain Knot set back the candle, and addressed the younger seaman, "Jim Haynes, formerly of Kennedy's gang in the *Rover*. If either of ye wants to convert this man I would advise thee and thy Master Wesley against starting him to confess his sins in public."

"I got the King's pardon," repeated Haynes. "Can't you let a man alone as has turned a new leaf?"

"I never saw the *Rover*, sir," put in Williamson. "But, as it happens, I came across a good part of her crew one time, and this Jim Haynes amongst 'em. What 's more, I know how most of 'em ended."

"On the gallows, I make no doubt," said Captain Knot. "Let me hear thy tale presently. But 'tis the *Rover*—the ship herself—that I 'm concerned about; the ship and the soul of her. A beautiful ship, hey?" He swung round on Haynes.

"Pretty enough," Haynes admitted in a hoarse voice.

"'Beautiful' was my word. Dutch built, as I 've

heard, and Dutch manned when that blackguard Howell Davies took her. But the man who designed her must have despised to call his craft by the name of any nation, for he had been up to heaven and fetched away the Lord's own pattern of a ship. The sheer of her ! and the entry ! It isn't enough to say that the wave off her cut-water never had time to catch so much as her heel, the dainty ! For she cut no water, or none that showed. She touched it, and it made room. The first time I crossed her 'twas in a gale of wind, and she 'd come up for a look at us. It couldn't have been but for that, and for wantonness, the seas being too steep and the weather too heavy for so much as hailing us, let alone boarding. I was young in those days—young and proud as a cock, it being my first command. My ship ? Oh, the same old *Jehoiada.* I 've commanded her and never another these thirty-five years. By rights I should have laid her to, hours and hours before. Nowadays I should lay-to as a matter of course. But I was proud, as I say, and venturesome, and anxious to cut a dash with my owners. So I held her on under close-reefed maintop sail and a napkin of a fo'c'sle, which answered well enough until the gale moderated and the seas

growing as it lessened began to knock the wind out of our sails, so that she fell slow to her helm in the troughs, why then I began to see my vainglory in a new light. And just then, out of the dirt astern, this *Rover* came overhauling us, leaping almost atop of us. She had sighted us, no doubt, and made sure we were running in fear of her. So just to give us a shake she passed us to windward and close. At one moment she was high up over our heads—high as our mainyard almost; the next I 'd be holding hard by the rigging and looking over as she went down and down, craning my neck over her deck and half wondering if she 'd spike our very hull as she lifted again. There were two men at her wheel, and a third man just aft of them; and right aft, on her very taffrail, a monkey, cracking nuts and grinning."

"Roberts's ape," blurted Jim Haynes.

"I reckoned the third man would be Roberts. He was grinning almost as comfortable as his ape, and once he looked up and shook his fist for a joke. A light-featured man, with a wig, as I remember; but his ship! Dancing past like a fairy on cork heels, the very deck of her dry, and three times the *Jehoiada* had taken it green. She passed us, downed helm, put breast to wave, went over it

like a lark over a wall, right across our bows, and left us.

"That was the first time. The second, 'twas about thirty leagues off Barbadoes, and the *Jchoiada* standing for home with a hold full of negroes from the Guinea Coast. This time she came up on us out of a summer sea, every stitch set, to her butterflies." Captain Knot turned on Haynes. "She carried a genius of a sailmaker?"

Haynes nodded. "Corson—Zepth Corson. He went with the rest."

"Ay! I can guess how. Well, then, they hanged an artist. The old Greeks or the Romans—I forget which—used to figure the soul in the shape of a butterfly. Master Haynes, what like was the soul of that ship? The beautiful!—I tell thee 'beautiful' was my word—and the hands she had passed through! Howell first, then Roberts, and now with that hulking Kennedy for master.

"Kennedy had given Roberts the slip—left him (as I 've heard) to rot in a waterless boat—and now was in his shoes, full sail for Execution Dock. There 's a silly proverb tells ye to speak of a man as you find him. I found Kennedy well enough.

Partly in fun, belike, and it happening to be his humour, he let me off easy. But I sensed him for one of the worst rogues I had ever run across. A hollow man, filled up with dirt—that 's what I made of Kennedy."

"I can tell you his end, sir," put in Williamson. "He got back to London and kept a bad house on Deptford Road. One of his women, in a tiff, laid information against him for robbery. While he was in Bridewell on this charge she sought out the ex-mate of a ship that he 'd plundered. Grant was his name. Grant pays a visit to Bridewell, spots Kennedy as his man, swears to a warrant for piracy, and gets him shipped to Marshalsea. The rogue, to save his neck, offered King's Evidence against eight or ten old comrades then in hiding."

"I was one," said Jim Haynes. "He was a dirty rogue, was Walter Kennedy—as you say, sir. But the judge wouldn't listen. So they took him from the Marshalsea and turned him off at Execution Dock. That would be in the summer of '21, as I make out."

"There or thereabouts," agreed Captain Knot. "That would be about the length of rope I gave him. I haven't exactly what they call second sight,

and yet I saw the hemp about his neck as plain, as plain . . . notwithstanding that he used me very civilly.

"I have told you that I was proud in those days. On one point I've continued proud as I was then. I belong to the Society of Friends. Not a gun have I ever carried on the *Jehoiada;* not a pistol nor sword nor cutlass would I ever permit to be brought aboard of her, much less to be worn. My owners called me a fool, and, what was more, they proved it. To which I made no answer but that they must take me or leave me. They took me.

"I had a sprinkling of Friends among my crew; but the rest, who would have fought the ship if we'd carried arms, treated me to some pretty black looks when the *Rover* bore down upon us. I kept my face as stiff as I could, making believe not to notice; and indeed I saw very little to fear. These gentry would have little use for my ship, which is, and ever was, a good plain sailer in sea-room, but no consort for theirs—not within six points of the wind. 'Why,' said I to my mate, Mr. Greenaway, that stood grumbling,' the *Jehoiada's* as good-looking as any man's wife has a right to be; but this here dancing beauty, angel or devil is not coming to

enlist the likes of the *Jehoiada*. And as for her cargo, Friend Greenaway,' I said, 'didst thou ever hear of a pirate that was hungry for a cargo of blacks? However much treasure he may carry, or however little, he takes only what stows close for its worth, and nine times out of ten he's in trouble to feed his own mouths. He'll take victual from us, and victual we have in plenty'—for I always feed my slaves fat as pigs; it's Christian, and it brings its earthly reward in the market. 'But for the rest,' said I, 'thou mark my words, he'll leave us alone.'

"Well, so it turned out, and to my astonishment even a little better. For what should prove to be this Kennedy's real reason for bringing us to? Victual he took from us, indeed, and enough to last him for three weeks. But his main purpose, he explained to me, coming aboard to my cabin. It seemed that he and his men, having taken much wealth, were weighted by it, and not only oppressed but frightened. 'Of what use is wealth, Master Quaker,' he asked, 'if it don't bring a man peace and comfort?' 'Of none at all, friend,' said I, 'and I am glad that repentance sits so heavy on thee.' 'Devil a bit it does,' said he. 'But I want

to enjoy my earnings, and it 's the same with my men. Now wealth made at sea will only bring enjoyment ashore, and the enjoyment we seek is not to be found in the islands, or, to my mind, anywhere on this Main. The most of us are dying to drop this trade, get back to England, bury the past, and live respectable, more or less. But that 's the curse of it,' said he. 'You took note of my ship, maybe, as she came up on you?' 'As one seaman to another, Captain Kennedy,' I said, 'she 's the loveliest thing I ever saw on the face of the waters.' 'She 's a devil,' says he. 'And I 'm chained to her. Worse than a devil she is, being damned herself. Face of the waters—ay, there 's her prison. Homeless, houseless, fleet as a bird, with all the law and the gospels in chase and giving her no rest. For all my pride in her she might sink under my shoes to-night, so I could win home to a tidy little parlour in Deptford.' 'It 's there, friend,' said I, 'that I cannot help thee, being bound for the Capes.' 'No,' said he; 'but you can take off eight, or maybe nine, men of my company that have a mind to settle in Virginia. They will bring their share of the money, and I don't doubt they 'll pay you well. I 'm

overmanned,' said he, 'for anything but fighting; and I 'm sick of fighting and plundering; I only ask to get away home and live clean.'

"The upshot was that I took over eight pirates with their chests and a light cutter boat, in which four of them had a mind to make, as soon as we neared the coast, for Maryland. Eight they were, and, as I remember, Jim Haynes, thou watched 'em pull from ship to ship, yourself in two minds to make the ninth. I had my glass on thee, and I never forget a face."

"What became of them?" asked Haynes.

Captain Knot made a purring noise in his throat.

"I carried them safe," said he," and delivered them. They made me a present of ten chests of sugar ten rolls of Brazil tobacco, thirty moidures and some gold dust, in all to the value of two hundred and fifty pounds. They also made presents to the sailors. But they gave me a great deal of trouble with their jovial ways, and it was difficult for me to keep any discipline because they wore arms day and night. So I was glad enough when we reached coast water, and half the party left us in the boat to make across the bay for Maryland. For the other four, I may tell thee that, coming to Hampton and anchoring,

I made haste ashore to Mr. Spottswood, the Governor, who sent off a guard, had them all bound, and hanged them out of hand. Nay, he did more, being a man to great energy. He sent patrols up the coast after the four that were making for Maryland, but (as it happened) had been forced by weather to land where they could, and were having good entertainment with the planters in those parts. These also he hanged. So all the eight were accounted for."

"And a d——n dirty trick!" swore Haynes, "when they had paid their passage."

"Ah, to be sure," said Captain Knot. "I forgot to tell that I handed the Governor all their property taken on board, and all the presents they had made me, and forced my men to do the like. I 've no taste—never had—for pirates or pirates' money."

"Well, I 'm glad I made up my mind as I did, —that 's all," Haynes growled.

Captain Knot fairly beamed on him. "I thought I had made it clear, friend," said he, "'twas the ship, and only the ship, that moved my bowels of pity. The beauty she was!" He sighed. "I never saw her again, nor heard what became of her."

Peter Williamson took up the story.

"I canna tell you, sir, what became of the ship. But I ken very well how the crew came to land, and it was not in this same *Rover*.

"Jamie Haynes, here, did once tell me a part of your tale, sir—how that they fell in with a Virginiaman, the master of which was a Quaker (saving your presence), and would carry no arms. He named me the eight men that went along with you, but the names, you 'll understand, don't stick in my head."

"Nor in mine," Captain Knot assured him heartily.

"I dare say Jamie could put names to them now." Williamson glanced at Haynes, who had thrust his shoulders back into the settle-corner and was brooding inattentive, with his chin sunk on his chest. "But there! they 're hanged long syne and don't signify. He said he 'd often wished he had gone along with them."

"Ha?" was Captain Knot's comment, short and grim.

"But he said, sir, that some days after parting company with you, cruising off Jamaica, they took a sloop thither-bound from Boston, loaded with bread and flour. Aboard of this sloop went all

hands that was in compact for breaking the gang and living honest—or all but Kennedy himself. They mistrusted Kennedy for his dirty ways, forbye that he had no skill in navigation, nor even in the reading and writing, but was only useful in a fight. He pleaded so bitterly, however, when they were about to throw him overboard—he having got ahead of them and sneaked into the sloop—that in the end they took him along, having first made him swear to be faithful, putting his hand upon the Bible, and taking the most dreadfullest oaths.

"So the *Rover* was left on the high seas, with the few that had a mind to hold on in her; and the sloop, with Kennedy's party (as we 'll call them) and their shares of plunder aboard, shaped right away for Ireland, where they had agreed to land and scatter. By bad navigation, however, they ran away to the north-west of Scotland, and into one gale upon another; whereby, with all bearings lost, they came near to perishing.

"Upon this coast, sir, in those days, my father kept what you might call a shebeen, a mile from Clashnessie, to the south of Eddruchillis Bay. Alec Williamson his name was, a widower, and myself a lad of sixteen, very industrious to learn penmanship

and the casting of accounts—my father doing some business off and on in the Free Trade, and, as he maintained, losing half his just profits by reason of his ignorance in these branches.

"Late one night, then—and the wind still blowing hard—there came a knocking at the door, and I opened it upon this very James Haynes as you see on this settle. He was wet through, and scared; and his first word was, 'Shut the door, for God's sake, and for God's sake close that chink of light between your shutters!' 'Is it a run?' asked my father, awake and coming downstairs at the noise of the latch. 'If so,' says my father, 'no warning has been put on me; and, what 's more, my man, I never saw your face in my life.' 'By the smell of this house,' says Haynes, 'the usquebah is not very far away. Fetch me a drink, and in the morning, if ye 're early risers, I 'll make ye rich for life.' I went with the jug, and, that side of the house being dead to leeward, I heard a roaring of tipsy voices away beyond the cross roads. When I brought it to him the man took the liquor down like milk. 'I gave 'em the slip at the turning,' says he, and laughs. 'They 're for Edinburgh, poor devils.' He would answer no questions. After another drink

and a bite he laid himself down in his sodden clothes before what was left of the fire, and was asleep as soon as his head touched the hearthstone.

"But before day he was up and led us—a little unsurely, having come in the dark—down to a cove we called the Sow's Shelter; a hole well-kenned as serviceable by the free-traders, running in narrow and steep-to, with a shelf of sand for the landing. What should we see there in the light of morning, but a good-sized sloop almost filling the hole, stem-on to the beach, and there grounded, hard and fast! . . . 'Take your run through her,' says this Haynes, pointing, 'and take your pickings before the whole country 's on top of 'ee—as it will be within these two hours. For the fools who ran her here,' says he, 'are rolling south down the road and passing themselves for shipwrecked men; and the money is in their pockets and the drink in their heads. So help yourselves, honest men, while you may,' says he. 'There 's silks aboard, and chinaware, and plenty good tobacco; but to look for the dollars and the precious stones and the gold dust will only waste your time.' 'Tis hard we three must work then before his lordship's factor come and claims wreckage,' said my father. 'Begging your pardon,'

says Haynes, 'but it will not be healthy for me to be taken here. You two must do without me, and that not until your lad here has taken me to safe hiding.' There was reason in this, and I led the man around a point of the foreshore to a snug cave. His clothing was stuffed with money so that he clinked as he climbed across the rocks. Well, in this cave by day, and by night in our cottage, we kept him hid for more than a month, it being sure capture for him within that time to try south after the rest of the crew. For I must tell you, sir ——"

"I am not curious to hear about this man," put in Captain Knot, with a pretty grim look at Haynes. "seeing that I missed the pleasure to hang him. He's alive, as I see, so we will say no more about it. As for the rest, it will content me to hear that they came to the gallows—never mind how."

"Very well, sir," said Williamson; "then I'll be as short as you please. Kennedy cut loose from them at Cromarty, and by some means got himself shipped across to Ireland; which delayed *his* sail into Execution Dock for a season. Six or seven others had sense after a while to break away singly

or in couples, and reached London without being disturbed or suspicioned. But the main gang flamed it down through Scotland, drinking and roaring at such a rate that in places folk shut themselves within doors. In others they treated the whole township to drink; which procured two of their stragglers to be knocked on the head, their bodies being found murdered on the road and their money taken from them. The residue, to the number of seventeen, won almost to the gates of Edinburgh. But, a post having ridden ahead, they were arrested and put into gaol on suspicion of they kent not what. The magistrates were not long at a loss over warrants; for two of the pact, offering themselves for evidence, were accepted; which put the others on trial: whereby nine were convicted and executed. To get back to Jamie Haynes here ——"

"I tell thee," Captain Knot interrupted, "I am fair sick hearing of Haynes."

Haynes stood up, wiping his mouth weakly with the back of his hand. His knees shook as he straightened himself. He seemed like a man in a twitter after long drinking.

"Is it the *Rover*? . . . I can tell you, sir, about

the *Rover*. She was a fine ship, sir. There was no mistaking her ——"

"Look here, my man," put in Captain Knot. "There 's no need to stand up and tell what I have been telling thee these twenty minutes."

"There was no mistaking her," Haynes went on, as though not hearing. His eyes were as if they withdrew their look deep in his head, and anon they stared out past the captain as though they saw a picture out in the twilight beyond the window-pane. He paused and gulped.

—"No mistaking her," he went on. "In the end I got away, first to Wick, then to Leith. There I shipped honest on the *Anna* brig for Jamaica. We called at St. Vincent in the Wind'ard Islands. Two days out from St. Vincent—and me forward, it being my watch—at daybreak there stood the *Rover* right ahead, and not two miles from us. There was no mistaking her, *as* you say, sir. She came on me out of the night like, as if she had been searching, with all her sins aboard—her sins and mine, sir. Instead of calling out I ran aft to the captain, and threw myself down, there by the wheel, at his feet, crying out her name, and how that was once a lost ship.

Haynes passed a hand over his eyes.

"There she was, sir—heeling to it—the main t'gallant sail blown away, and all the rest of her canvas crowded. The captain put up his glass. 'They must be mad aboard then,' says he; 'or else blazing drunk—or she 's behaving,'—For she fetched up in the wind, staggered dead, and after a bit the breeze fetched her a clap that laid her rail under. She righted, paid off again, and again she fetched up shivering. 'We 'll hail her,' says our captain. 'I 'm not afraid of any seaman that handles his ship so.' He hailed, and none answered.

"Our captain, manning up close, saw that her decks were empty. There was no one at the wheel, which wasn't even lashed. He ordered me and five others to board her along with him."

Haynes covered his eyes again, and henceforth to the end kept them covered.

"There was no crew aboard, sir: no trace of a crew. The hold was empty, but for nine niggers—live niggers, starved to the bone—sitting there with the whites of their eyes shining. Oh, my God! Nine niggers, and not a word to be got from them!

"What is it you say, sir? There was no trace, I swear! Not a spot of blood on her decks or anywhere.

Cleaned down from fo'c'sle to cabin. Food enough on board, too. No, the men were not chained. But there they sat, the flesh shrunk on their bones and the whites of their eyes shining. . . ."

Haynes dropped back on the settle, and covered his face with both hands.

"Well?" asked Captain Knot. "What did your skipper do with her?"

"Put half a dozen hands aboard of her, sir: with orders to keep company and bear up with us for Kingston."

"And——"

"And that night she skipped ahead. . . . We never saw her again. She never came to port."

"Amen," said Captain Knot after a pause. "She never was for port."

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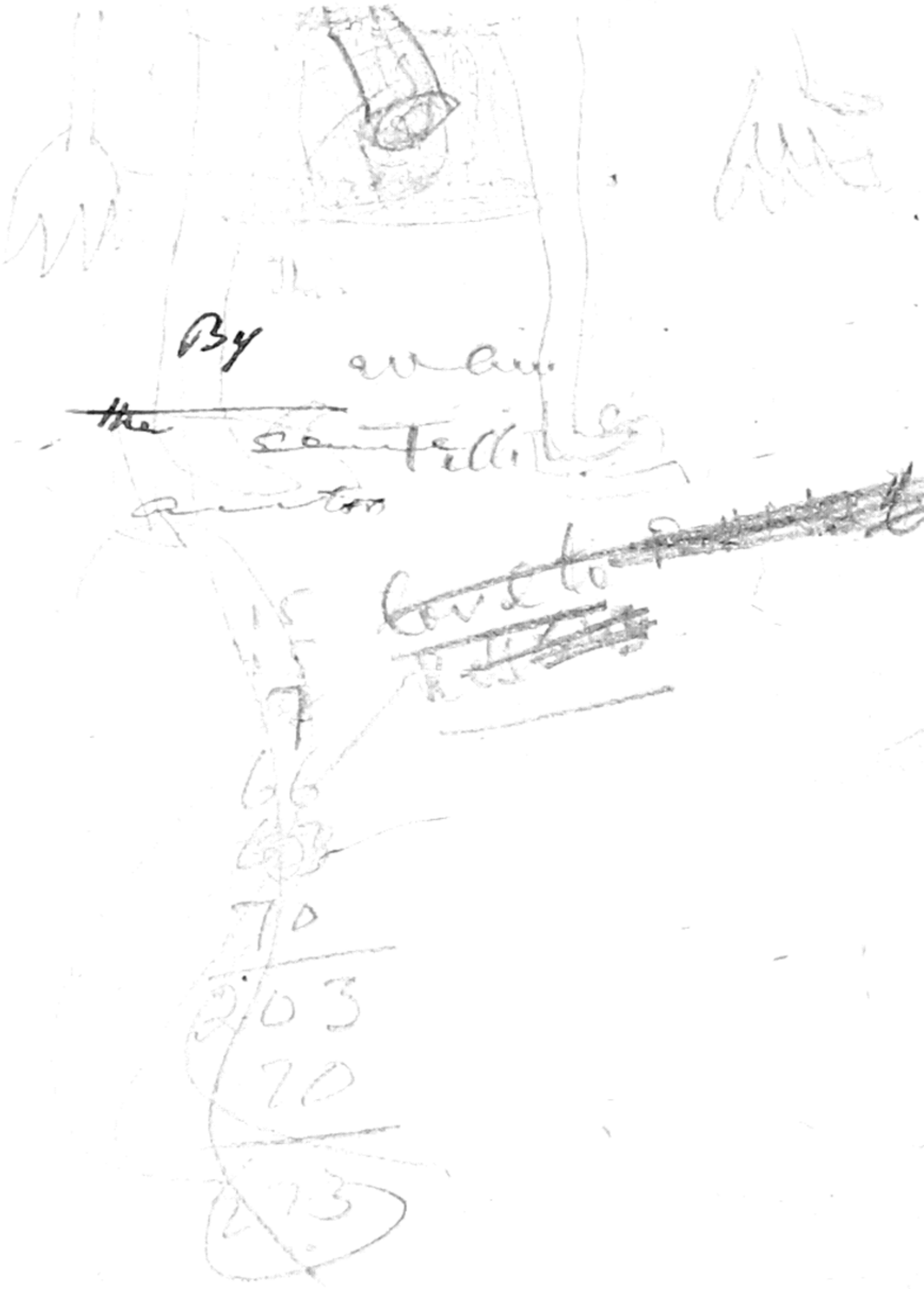
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